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QUEEN of the UNIVERSE

AN ANTHOLOGY
on the
ASSUMPTION AND QUEENSHIP
OF MARY

Edited by
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Sister Marie of the Purification,
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on her diamond jubilee

THE MARIAN LIBRARY SERIES

The Promised Woman

Queen of the Universe

The Marian Apostolate (in preparation)

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PREFACE

THE FIRST VOLUME of the Marian Library series of anthologies, *THE PROMISED WOMAN* (Grail, 1954), was born of necessity. With the coming of the Marian Year and the centenary of the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the Marian Library was receiving numerous requests for current material on that doctrine—material which did not exist in book form because no work on the Immaculate Conception had been published in the United States in twenty-five years. The first volume of this series, containing twenty-six selections and eight documents covering liturgical, apologetical, theological, historical, and devotional aspects of the doctrine, attempted to fill the gap. Father Thomas Plassmann, O.F.M., has since published a book treating the first privilege of Mary, *THE RADIANT CROWN OF GLORY* (Benziger, 1954) and the University of Notre Dame Press is preparing an important collection by leading theologians of the world, *THE DOGMA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION*, edited by Edward D. O'Connor, C.S.C.

This second volume of the series is the result of a similar necessity. Since the definition of the Assumption in November, 1950, and the proclamation of the feast of Our Lady's Queenship in October, 1954, no work has appeared in English which has been able to incorporate the most recent papal documents and theological research on these subjects. The best book on

the market about the Assumption is Father Joseph Duhr's *THE GLORIOUS ASSUMPTION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD* (Kenedy, 1950). A thorough treatment of the subject before the proclamation, Father Duhr's work shows the evolution of the belief in the dogma of the Assumption, the present state of belief in the doctrine, and the opportuneness of the definition. An appendix (most of which appears in the present volume) discusses the evolution of the iconography of the Assumption. But excellent as it is, Father Duhr's book was originally written in 1946 in French. Hence it is not based on the latest sources, and was written well in advance of the encyclical *Munificentissimus Deus*.

A still earlier book, much less scholarly, but still useful, is *MARY'S ASSUMPTION*, by Raphael V. O'Connell, S.J. (America Press, 1930). More recently a volume by Father Aloïs Janssen on the Assumption has appeared in an English translation, *THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY* (Fresno, Academy Library Guild, 1955), but this again is an older work which was first published in 1931.

Possibly the most valuable of all publications in English on the Assumption is the special Jaunary, 1951 issue of *The Thomist* (now, unfortunately, out of print), a number dedicated entirely to the Assumption, and including contributions by Archbishop Cicognani, Bishop Sheen, J. B. Carol, O.F.M., M. D. Philippe, O.P. (included in this volume), Caspar Friethoff, O.P., Gabriel Roschini, O.S.M., F. M. Abel, O.P., William O'Shea, S.S., and Kilian J. Healy, O.Carm.

In treating the dogma of the Assumption in *Queen of the Universe*, an attempt has been made to include the best recent work by Marian authorities, especially material published

since the definition. Five selections have been added for documentary purposes. The selections have not been limited to the works of theologians, however. Authors like Frances Parkinson Keyes and the late Caryll Houselander provide a more popular approach. While we have not included it in this collection because it repeats much of what is already here, Graham Greene's "The Assumption of Mary," the often-reprinted article which first appeared in *Life*, October 30, 1950, is worthy of mention as a work by a popular writer on the subject. Other valuable articles which lack of space has eliminated from this anthology are "The Lady and the Issue," by Walter J. Ong, S.J. (*Cross Currents*, Spring, 1952); "The Assumption and the Christian Pattern," by Bernard Leeming, S.J. (*Month*, March, 1951); and "The Assumption and Eternity," by Ralph Russell, O.S.B. (*Downside Review*, Summer, 1951).

The limitations of literature in English on the Assumption described above may be applied similarly to the Queenship. The Assumption and the Queenship are, of course, closely related doctrines, but since the latter has not been defined by the Church there is even less written on the subject. One useful forty-six-page pamphlet by Rev. James E. Sherman, *The Queenship of Mary Most Holy* (Grail, 1954), was published just before Pius XII wrote *Ad Caeli Reginam*, proclaiming the liturgical feast. The 1953 convention of the Mariological Society of America was devoted to the study of the Queenship, and *Marian Studies* (volume 3, 1953), containing the proceedings of this convention, is the most valuable single work in English on the Queenship—but it also antedates the encyclical.

A note on the Mariological Society of America is in order here, for the future of Marian literature in the United States

would seem to depend to a great extent on the success of that organization. The development of literature on Our Lady, even since the foundation of the society in 1950, is an indication of the influence it will have in the future.

The Mariological Society was founded in 1950 under the leadership of Rev. Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M., who also served as president for four years. Rev. Cyril Vollert, S.J., Rev. Bernard Le Frois, S.V.D., and Rev. Eamon R. Carroll, O.Carm., (1957-) have succeeded to the presidency of the group, and Father Carol remains as secretary and editor of the society's publication, *Marian Studies*. This publication is the only scientific Marian periodical published in the Western Hemisphere. Now numbering over two hundred members, the society holds an annual convention and has in past meetings discussed such phases of Mariology as the Spiritual Maternity, the Immaculate Conception, the Queenship, Perpetual Virginity, the Divine Maternity, the Coredemption, and Mary's Death.

Now while it is true that the work of this organization is strictly theological, it is also true that American Marian literature will improve and develop insofar as it is able to base itself on a sound Marian theology. Not all those who have the ability to write well about Our Lady have the time or ability to dig into foreign works, or to sift the ideas of technical studies. They need to reap the fruits of an organization such as the Mariological Society, and the influence of the society has been slowly seeping down to those authors who wish to popularize these teachings in books for the ordinary reader.

All those interested in making Our Lady known, loved, and served must be interested in the future of Marian literature in the United States, for literature will always be a reflection of (and reflected in) the minds of devotees. The Marian apos-

tolate will be as solid as the books which form the ideas of the apostles. In this regard, a debt of gratitude is owed to the Mariological Society of America. In years past, American Marian literature has occasionally been castigated for its subjective, sentimentalized character, often the result of poor translations of European works. Frequently, the excuse for such books has been that those who love do not have to worry about exactitude of expression or perfection of style, and those writers and readers who love Our Lady need not be too particular about theologically exact terms or appealing expression. Nevertheless, it seems fair to say that the aversion which some people have developed towards devotion to Mary may be attributed, at least in part, to the former inadequacy of our doctrinal and devotional literature in this country.

It might be added that one of the purposes of the Marian Library has been an attempt to popularize the profound, without diluting it, in the various publications issued here. Leading theologians and writers have contributed articles for the *Marianist* magazine, the *Marian Reprint* series, the *Marian Library Studies*, and the *Marian Library Anthologies*. A full, apostolic devotion to Mary depends on a firm doctrinal foundation, and we have tried to help provide this foundation by presenting the writings, or at least the ideas, of outstanding Mariologists in a popular way. There is, of course, much room for improvement.

A final word: this anthology was not compiled to be read aloud for group reading. Some of the selections, especially those by Father Vann, Mrs. Keyes, Caryl Houselander, Bishop Sheen, and Father Stanley, are surely suitable for such reading. Some of the others, however, will prove valuable only with individual reading and study, and do not lend themselves to

oral reading. Several of the selections were originally given as lectures, and the authors' personalities do not always come through in the articles as published here—one might even say they suffer from print.

Three of the selections in Part Two were written especially for this book by Father William Most, Father Eamon Carroll, O.Carm., and Father Thomas Stanley, S.M. It would be difficult offhand to locate three busier men, yet all three consented, on rather short notice, to prepare contributions on the Queenship. We are especially grateful to them.

Our thanks, too, to Father Philip C. Hoelle, S.M., director of the Marian Library, who gave many suggestions in the preparation of the work; to Brother Leo Murray, S.M., Brother Gerard Sullivan, S.M., Miss Cerese Pape, Mrs. Eugene Cochran, and Mrs. John Zimmerman who assisted in various capacities; and to Miss Genevieve Wening, who typed most of the manuscript.

Stanley G. Mathews, S.M.

University of Dayton
January 10, 1957

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Part One

The Assumption

*Hark! she is call'd, the parting houre is come
Take thy Farewell, poor world! heav'n must goe home
A piece of heav'nly earth; purer and brighter
Than the chaste stars, whose choice lamps come to light her
While through the crystall orbes, clearer than they
She climbs; and makes a far more milky way.*

—Richard Crashaw

THE ASSUMPTION AND THE MODERN WORLD

by

BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN

BISHOP, preacher, lecturer, missionary, professor, convert-maker—Fulton J. Sheen has become familiar to millions of Americans of all faiths through his radio and television appearances. Known throughout the world as an author and scholar, he is presently National Director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith and editor of *Worldmission*.

Born in El Paso, Illinois, in 1895, Bishop Sheen studied under the Marianists at Spalding Institute, Peoria, and attended St. Viator's College, the Catholic University of America (where he later served on the faculty for many years), the University of Louvain, and the Angelicum, Rome.

Among his numerous books and pamphlets are several Marian works: *The Seven Words of Jesus and Mary*; *Jesus, Son of Mary*; *The Woman*; *Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary*, and *The World's First Love*.

THE ASSUMPTION AND THE MODERN WORLD

by

BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN

THE DEFINITION of the Immaculate Conception was made when the Modern World was born. Within five years of that date, and within six months of the apparition of Lourdes where Mary said, "I am the Immaculate Conception," Charles Darwin wrote the *Origin of Species*, Karl Marx completed his *Introduction to the Critique of the Philosophy of Hegel* ("Religion is the opium of the people"), and John Stuart Mill published his *Essay on Liberty*. At the moment the spirit of the world was drawing up a philosophy that would issue in two World Wars in twenty-one years, and the threat of a third, the Church came forward to challenge the falsity of the new philosophy. Darwin took man's mind off his Divine Origin and fastened it on an unlimited future when he would become a kind of God. Marx was so impressed with this idea of inevitable progress that he asked Darwin if he would accept a dedication of one of his books. Then, following Feuerbach, Marx affirmed not a bourgeois atheism of the intellect, but an atheism of the will, in which man hates God because man is God. Mill reduced the freedom of the new man to license and the right to do whatever he pleases, thus preparing a chaos of conflicting egotisms, which the world would solve by Totalitarianism.

If these philosophers were right, and if man is naturally good and capable of deification through his own efforts, then it follows that everyone is immaculately conceived. The Church arose in protest and affirmed that only one human person in all the world is immaculately conceived, that man is prone to sin, and that freedom is best preserved when, like Mary, a creature answers Fiat to the Divine Will.

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception wilted and killed the false optimism of the inevitable and necessary progress of man without God. Humbled in his Darwinian-Marxian-Millian pride, modern man saw his doctrine of progress evaporate. The interval between the Napoleonic and Franco-Prussian Wars was fifty-five years; the interval between the Franco-Prussian War and World War I was forty-three years; the interval between World Wars I and II, twenty-one years. Fifty-five, forty-three, twenty-one, and a Korean War five years after World War II is hardly progress. Man finally saw that he was not naturally good. Once having boasted that he came from the beast, he now found himself to be acting as a beast.

Then came the reaction. The Optimistic Man who boasted of his immaculate conception now became the Pessimistic Man who could see within himself nothing but a bundle of libidinous, dark cavernous drives. As in the definition of the Immaculate Conception, the Church had to remind the world that perfection is not biologically inevitable, so now in the definition of the Assumption, it has to give hope to the creature of despair. Modern despair is the effect of a disappointed hedonism and centers principally around Sex and Death. To these two ideas, which preoccupy the modern mind, the Assumption is indirectly related.

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The primacy of Sex is to a great extent due to Sigmund Freud, whose basic principle in his own words is: "Human actions and customs derive from sexual impulses, and fundamentally, human wishes are unsatisfied sexual desires. . . . Consciously or unconsciously, we all wish to unite with our mothers and kill our fathers, as Oedipus did—unless we are female, in which case we wish to unite with our fathers and murder our mothers." The other major concern of modern thought is Death. The beautiful philosophy of being is reduced to *Dasein*, which is only *in-der-Welt-sein*. There is no freedom, no spirit, and no person-ality. Freedom is for death. Liberty is contingency threatened with complete destruction. The future is nothing but a projection of death. The aim of existence is to look death in the eye.

Jean-Paul Sartre passes from a phenomenology of sexuality to that which he calls "nausea," or a brazen confrontation of nothingness, toward which existence tends. Nothing precedes man; nothing follows

man. Whatever is opposite him is a negation of his ego, and therefore nothingness. God created the world out of nothingness; Sartre creates nothingness out of the world and the despairing human heart. "Man is a useless passion."

✓ Agnosticism and Pride were the twin errors the Church had to meet in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception; now it is the despair resulting from Sex and Death it has to meet in this hour. When the agnostics of the last century came in contact with the world and its three libidos, they became libertines. But when pleasure diminished and made hungry where most it satisfied, the agnostics, who had become libertines by attaching themselves to the world, now began in disgust to withdraw themselves from the world and became philosophers of Existentialism. Philosophers like Sartre, and Heidegger, and others are born of a detachment from the world, not as the Christian ascetic, because he loves God, but because (they are disgusted with the world.) They become contemplatives, not to enjoy God, but to wallow in their despair, to make a philosophy out of it, to be brazen about their boredom, and to make death the center of their destiny. The new contemplatives are in the monasteries of the jaded, which are built not along the waters of Siloe, but along the dark banks of the Styx.

These two basic ideas of modern thought, Sex and Death, are not unrelated. Freud himself hinted at the union of *Eros* and *Thanatos*. Sex brings death, first of all because in sex the other person is possessed, or annihilated, or ignored for the sake of pleasure. But this subjection implies a compression and a destruction of life for the sake of the *Eros*. Secondly, death is a shadow which is cast over sex. Sex seeks pleasure, but since it assumes that this life is all, every pleasure is seasoned not only with a diminishing return, but also with the thought that death will end pleasure forever. *Eros* is *Thanatos*. Sex is death.

✓ From a philosophical point of view, the doctrine of the Assumption meets the *Eros-Thanatos* philosophy head-on, by lifting humanity from the darkness of Sex and Death to the light of Love and Life. These are the two philosophical pillars on which rests the belief in the Assumption.

1. Love. The Assumption affirms not Sex but Love. St. Thomas in his inquiry into the effects of love mentions ecstasy as one of them.

In ecstasy one is "lifted out of his body," an experience which poets and authors and orators have felt in a mild form when in common parlance, "they were carried away by their subject." On a higher level, the spiritual phenomenon of levitation is due to such an intense love of God that saints are literally lifted off the earth. Love, like fire, burns upward, since it is basically desire. It seeks to become more and more united with the object that is loved. Our sensate experiences are familiar with the earthly law of gravitation, which increases as we get closer to God. This "pull" on our hearts by the Spirit of God is always present, and it is only our refusing wills and the weakness of our bodies as a result of sin which keep us earth-bound. Some souls become impatient with the restraining body; St. Paul asks to be delivered from its prison house.

If God exerts a gravitational pull on all souls, given the intense love of Our Lord for His Blessed Mother which descended, and the intense love of Mary for her Lord which ascended, there is created a suspicion that love at this stage would be so great as "to pull the body with it." Given further an immunity from original sin, there would not be in the body of Our Lady the dichotomy, tension, and opposition that exists in us between body and soul. If the distant moon moves all the surging tides of earth, then the love of Mary for Jesus and the love of Jesus for Mary should result in such an ecstasy as "to lift her out of this world."

Love in its nature is an Ascension in Christ and an Assumption in Mary. So closely are Love and the Assumption related that a few years ago the writer, when instructing a Chinese lady, found that the one truth in Christianity which was easiest for her to believe was the Assumption. She personally knew a saintly soul who lived on a mat in the woods, whom thousands of people visited to receive her blessing. One day, according to the belief of all who knew the saint, she was "assumed" into heaven. The explanation the convert from Confucianism gave was: "Her love was so great that her body followed her soul." One thing is certain: the Assumption is easy to understand if one loves God deeply, but it is hard to understand if one loves not.

Plato in his *Symposium*, reflecting the Grecian view of the elevation of love, says that love of the flesh should lead to love of the spirit. The true meaning of love is that it leads to God. Once the earthly love has

fulfilled its task, it disappears, as the symbol gives way to reality. The Assumption is not the killing of the *Eros*, but its transfiguration through *Agape*. It does not say that love in a body is wrong, but it does hold that it can be so right, when it is Godward, that the beauty of the body itself is enhanced.

Our Age of Carnality which loves the Body Beautiful is lifted out of its despair, born of the Electra and Oedipus incests, to a Body that is Beautiful because it is a Temple of God, a Gate through which the Word of Heaven passed to earth, a Tower of Ivory up which climbed Divine Love to kiss upon the lips of His Mother a Mystic Rose. With one stroke of an infallible dogmatic pen, the Church lifts the sacredness of love out of sex (without denying the role of the body in love). Here is one body that reflects in its uncounted hues the creative love of God. To a world that worships the body, the Church now says: "There are two bodies in heaven, one the glorified human nature of Jesus, the other the assumed human nature of Mary. Love is the secret of the Ascension of one and of the the Assumption of the other, for Love craves unity with its Beloved. The Son returns to the Father in the unity of Divine Nature; and Mary returns to Jesus in the unity of human nature. The nuptial flight is the event to which our whole generation moves."

2. Life. Life is the second philosophical pillar on which the Assumption rests. Life is unitive; death is devisive. Goodness is the food of life, as evil is the food of death. Errant sex impulses are the symbol of the body's division from God as a result of original sin. Death is the last stroke of that division. Wherever there is sin, there is multiplicity: the Devil says, "My name is Legion; there are many of us." (Mark 5:9) But life is immanent activity. The higher the life, the more immanent is the activity, says St. Thomas. The plant drops its fruit from a tree, the animal drops its kind for a separate existence, but the spiritual mind of man begets the fruit of a thought which remains united to the mind, although distinct from it. Hence intelligence and life are intimately related. *Da mihi intellectum et vivam*. God is perfect life because of perfect inner intellectual activity. There is no extrinsicism, no dependence, no necessary outgoing on the part of God.

Since the imperfection of life comes from remoteness to the source of life and because of sin, it follows that the creature who is preserved

from original sin is immune from that psychological division which sin begets. The Immaculate Conception guarantees a highly integrated and unified life. The purity of such a life is threefold: a physical purity which is integrity of body; a mental purity without any desire for a division of love, which love of creatures apart from God would imply; and finally, a psychological purity which is immunity from the uprising of concupiscence, the sign and symbol of our weakness and diversity. This triple purity is the essence of the most highly unified creature whom this world has ever seen.

Added to this intense life in Mary, which is free from the division caused by sin, there is still a higher degree of life because of her Divine Motherhood. Through her portals Eternity became young and appeared as a Child; through her, as to another Moses, not the tables of the Law, but the Logos was given and written on her own heart; through her, not a manna which men eat and die, but the Eucharist descends, which if a man eats, he will never die. But if those who commune with the Bread of Life never die, then what shall we say of her who was the first living Ciborium of that Eucharist, and who on Christmas day opened it at the communion rail of Bethlehem to say to Wise Men and Shepherds: "Behold the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world"?

Here there is not just a life free from the division which brings death, but a life united with Eternal Life. Shall she, as the garden in which grew the lily of divine sinlessness and the red rose of the passion of redemption, be delivered over to the weeds and be forgotten by the Heavenly Gardener? Would not one communion preserved in grace through life ensure a heavenly immortality? Then shall not she, in whose womb was celebrated the nuptials of eternity and time, be more of eternity than time? As she carried Him for nine months, there was fulfilled in another way the law of life: "And they shall be two in one flesh."

No grown men and women would like to see the home in which they were reared subjected to a violent destruction of a bomb, even though they no longer lived in it. Neither would Omnipotence, who tabernacled Himself within Mary, consent to see His fleshly home subjected to the dissolution of the tomb. If grown men love to go back to their

✓ homes when they reach the fullness of life, and become more conscious of the debt they owe their mothers, then shall not Divine Life go back in search of His living cradle and take that "flesh-girt paradise" to heaven with Him, there to be "gardenered by the Adam new"?

In this doctrine of the Assumption, the Church meets the despair of the world in a second way. It affirms the beauty of life as against death. When wars, sex, and sin multiply the discords of men, and death threatens on every side, the Church bids us lift up our hearts to the life that has the immortality of the Life which nourished it. Feuerbach said that a man is what he eats. He was more right than he knew. Eat the food of earth, and one dies; eat the Eucharist, and one lives eternally. (She, who is the mother of the Eucharist, escapes the decomposition of death.

The Assumption challenges the nothingness of the Mortician philosophers in a new way. The greatest task of the spiritual leaders today is to save mankind from despair, into which Sex and Fear of Death have cast it. The world that used to say, "Why worry about the next world, when we live in this one?" has finally learned the hard way that, by not thinking about the next life, one cannot even enjoy this life. When optimism completely breaks down and becomes pessimism, the Church holds forth the promise of hope. Threatened as we are by war on all sides, with death about to be rained from the sky by Promethean fires, the Church defines a Truth that has Life at its center. Like a kindly mother whose sons are going off to war, she strokes our heads and says: "You will come back alive, as Mary came back again after walking down the valley of Death." As the world fears defeat by death, the Church sings the defeat of death. Is not this the harbinger of a better world, as the refrain of life rings out amidst the clamors of the philosophers of death?

As Communism teaches that man has only a body, but not a soul, so the Church answers: "Then let us begin with a Body." As the mystical body of the anti-Christ gathers around the tabernacle doors of the cadaver of Lenin, periodically filled with wax to give the illusion of immortality to those who deny immortality, the Mystical Body of Christ bids the despairing to gaze on the two most serious wounds earth ever received: the empty tomb of Christ and the empty tomb of Mary.

In 1854 the Church spoke of the Soul in the Immaculate Conception. In 1950 its language was about the Body: the Mystical Body, the Eucharist, and the Assumption. With deft dogmatic strokes the Church is repeating Paul's truth to another pagan age: "Your bodies are meant for the Lord." There is nothing in a body to beget despair. Man is related to Nothingness, as the Philosophers of Decadentism teach, but only in his origin, not in his destiny. They put Nothingness as the end; the Church puts it at the beginning, for man was created *ex nihilo*. The modern man gets back to nothingness through despair; the Christian knows nothingness only through self-negation, which is humility. The more that the pagan "nothings" himself, the closer he gets to the hell of despair and suicide. The more the Christian "nothings" himself, the closer he gets to God. Mary went so deep down into Nothingness that she became exalted. *Respexit humilitatem ancillae suae*. And her exaltation was also her Assumption.

Coming back to the beginning . . . to *Eros* and *Thanatos*: Sex and Death, said Freud, are related. They are related in this sense: *Eros* as egotistic love leads to the death of the soul. But the world need not live under that curse. The Assumption gives *Eros* a new meaning. Love does lead to death. Where there is love, there is self-forgetfulness, and the maximum in self-forgetfulness is the surrender of life. "Greater love than this no man hath, that he lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) Our Lord's love led to His death. Mary's love led to her transfixion with seven swords. Greater love than this no woman hath, that she stand beneath the Cross of her Son to share, in her own way, in the Redemption of the world.

Within three decades the definition of the Assumption will cure the pessimism and despair of the modern world. Freud, who did so much to develop this pessimism, took as his motto: "If I cannot move the Gods on high, I shall set all hell in an uproar." That uproar which he created will now be stilled by a Lady as powerful as an "army drawn up in battle array." The age of the "body beautiful" will now become the age of the Assumption.

In Mary there is a triple transition. In the Annunciation we pass from the holiness of the Old Testament to the holiness of Christ. At Pentecost we pass from the holiness of the Historical Christ to the holiness of the

Mystical Christ or His Body, which is the Church. Mary here receives the Spirit for a second time. The first overshadowing was to give birth to the Head of the Church; this second overshadowing is to give birth to His Body as she is in the midst of the Apostles abiding in prayer. The third transition is the Assumption, as she becomes the first human person to realize the historical destiny of the faithful as members of Christ's Mystical Body, beyond time, beyond death, and beyond judgment.

Mary is always in the vanguard of humanity. She is compared to Wisdom, presiding at Creation; she is announced as the Woman who will conquer Satan, as the Virgin who will conceive. She becomes the first person since the Fall to have a unique and unrepeatable kind of union with God; she mothers the infant Christ in Bethlehem; she mothers the Mystical Christ at Jerusalem; and now, by her Assumption, she goes ahead like her Son to prepare a place for us. She participates in the glory of Her Son, reigns with Him, presides at His Side over the destinies of the Church in time, and intercedes for us, to Him, as He, in His turn, intercedes to the Heavenly Father.

Adam came before Eve chronologically. The new Adam, Christ, comes after the new Eve, Mary, chronologically, although existentially He preceded her as the Creator a creature. By stressing for the moment only the time element, Mary always seems to be the Advent of what is in store for man. She anticipates Christ for nine months, as she bears Heaven within her; she anticipates His Passion at Cana, and His Church at Pentecost. Now, in the last great doctrine of the Assumption, she anticipates heavenly glory, and the definition comes at a time when men think of it least.

One wonders if this could not be the last of the great Truths of Mary to be defined by the Church. Anything else might seem to be an anticlimax after she is declared to be in heaven, body and soul. But actually there is one other truth left to be defined, and that is that she is the Mediatrix, under Her Son, of all graces. As St. Paul speaks of the Ascension of Our Lord as the prelude to His intercession for us, so we, fittingly, should speak of the Assumption of Our Lady as a prelude to her intercession for us. First, the place, heaven; then, the function, intercession. The nature of her role is not to call Her Son's attention to some need, in an emergency unnoticed by Him, nor is it to "win" a

difficult consent. Rather it is to unite herself to His compassionate Mercy and give a human voice to His Infinite Love. The main ministry of Mary is to incline men's hearts to obedience to the Will of her Divine Son. Her last recorded words at Cana are still her words in the Assumption: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, that do ye." Added to these is the Christian prayer written by Francis Thompson to the daughter of the ancient Eve:

The celestial traitress play,
And all mankind to bliss betray;
With sacrosanct cajoleries,
And starry treachery of your eyes,
Tempt us back to Paradise.

THE DOGMA OF THE ASSUMPTION

by

BISHOP JOHN J. WRIGHT

BISHOP WRIGHT hails from Boston, where he was born in 1909. He studied at the Boston Latin School, Boston College, St. John's Seminary, and the North American College, Rome. He was ordained in 1935 and served for a time as a professor at St. John's Seminary. In 1947 he was consecrated auxiliary bishop of Boston, and three years later was appointed first bishop of Worcester.

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THE DOGMA OF THE ASSUMPTION

by

BISHOP JOHN J. WRIGHT

ON NOVEMBER 1, 1950, in the basilica of St. Peter's in Rome, in a setting unsurpassed for magnificence or meaning in the recent history of the Church, the Vicar of Christ, exercising his office as supreme Pastor and Teacher and in the plenitude of his Apostolic authority, pronounced, declared and defined as a truth revealed by God "that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory."¹

Thus, in our day, the first solemn exercise of the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff since the definition of that prerogative in the Vatican Council, sets before us a truth to be professed by divine and Catholic faith conformable to the Vatican Council's decree: "All those things are to be believed by divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the written word of God or in tradition, and which are proposed by the Church, either in solemn judgment or in its ordinary and universal teaching office, as divinely revealed truths which must be believed."²

This brief commentary on the definition of the dogma of the Assumption in the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* may well begin with the immediate antecedents of the definition as these are set forth in the Constitution itself. The Holy Father mentions at the outset the flood of requests for the definition of the dogma of the Assumption which followed that of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mother of God. Many had immediately seen in the dogma that "the Blessed Virgin Mary was at the very moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of mankind, preserved free from all stain of original sin"³

the root reason for the incorruptibility of Mary's body and her eventual Assumption, body and soul, into the glory of heaven. These privileges are most closely bound one to the other. The Apostolic See was petitioned to define the dogma of the Assumption not only by individual Catholics, but also by those who could speak for nations or ecclesiastical provinces and, indeed, by a notable number of the Fathers of the Vatican Council.

Such petitions grew in number and urgency through the years from the Pontificate of Pius IX to the time Pius XII ascended the throne of Peter. All these petitions were gathered together and carefully evaluated at the order of His Holiness, Pius XII. On May 1, 1946, in the letter *Deiparae Virginis Mariae*, Pius XII asked the Bishops throughout the world this question: "Do you, venerable Brethren, in your outstanding wisdom and prudence, judge that the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin can be proposed and defined as a dogma of faith? Do you, with your clergy and people, desire that it should be?"⁴ The response to that question, the fruit of prayers and petitions, of meditation in Marian Weeks and Congresses throughout the world, not to mention of scientific studies by historians, liturgists, patristic scholars, scripture experts, and theologians, brought out with convincing clarity that the dogma of the Assumption was in the divine deposit of the faith. On the feast of All Saints, Pius XII gave the final and irreformable judgment of the question by his solemn definition of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, body and soul, into heavenly glory.

Thus we are now in a position to make a selective summary of some matters of interest to theologians. The present Apostolic Constitution serves as a happy illustration of the sources of revelation, the teaching authority of the *magisterium* of the Church in both its ordinary and extraordinary exercise, the use of documents of tradition and the function of the Fathers, doctors, and theologians of the Church in dogmatic progress properly understood.

I. THE MAGISTERIUM

The definition itself presents a truth in the field of dogmatic theology. Dogmatic theology presupposes as established in fundamental theology these three propositions: (1) that God has given a public revelation;

(2) that there are two founts or sources in which we may find that revelation, Sacred Scripture and Ecclesiastical Tradition; (3) that the preaching of the ever-living *magisterium* of the Church is the rule of faith.

Some of the corollaries and subsidiary theses connected with those propositions have received re-emphasis in the Encyclical *Humani generis*. Of particular importance, in view of their illustration in *Munificentissimus Deus*, is the prominence given to the assertion that God has given His Church both the sources of revelation and the sacred *magisterium*, having commissioned the latter to elucidate and explain what is contained only obscurely or merely implicitly in the deposit of faith. Further, the power to expound the deposit of faith authoritatively and authentically was given by Our Lord, not to all the faithful, not to the theologians themselves, but only to the Church's *magisterium*. This power the Church has used again and again, throughout the centuries, in both the ordinary and extraordinary exercise of its authority.⁵

This sacred *magisterium* consists of the Roman Pontiff for the whole Church; it consists of the bishops for their dioceses. The power of the Church, exercised in its ordinary teaching authority, is recalled by the present Constitution in these words:

This outstanding agreement of the Catholic prelates and faithful, affirming that the bodily Assumption of God's Mother into heaven can be defined as a dogma of faith, since it shows us the concordant teaching of the Church's ordinary doctrinal authority and the concordant faith of the Christian people which the same doctrinal authority sustains and directs, thus by itself and in an entirely certain and infallible way, manifested this privilege as a truth revealed by God and contained in that divine deposit which Christ has delivered to His Spouse to be guarded faithfully and to be taught infallibly.⁶

The teaching authority of the Church, under the protection of the Spirit of Truth, preserves revealed truths pure and entire throughout

every age, adding nothing, taking nothing away. Thus "the universal agreement of the Church's ordinary teaching authority" gives us a certain and firm proof demonstrating that the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into heaven is a truth that has been revealed by God and is, consequently, a truth that must be firmly and faithfully believed by all the children of the Church.⁷ Since this is so, the doctrine of the Assumption has hitherto enjoyed the technical theological note of *de fide ex iugi magisterio* and *definibilis*. At the same time, this statement in the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* illustrates the meaning of the truth that the preaching of the living *magisterium* is the rule of faith, that is, a norm by which we can know with certainty what Catholics must believe with divine faith. When the truth is explicitly and solemnly defined, as the dogma of the Assumption now is in *Munificentissimus Deus*, the technical theological note becomes *de fide definita*.

This exercise of the ordinary and extraordinary doctrinal authority of the *magisterium* enables us to appreciate the distinction between a *new dogma* and any alleged *new revelation*. A dogma is a revealed truth as proposed for belief by the infallible *magisterium*. Now we know that we cannot have a post-apostolic public revelation, but we can have a revealed truth already contained in the deposit of faith, only now explicitly proposed for belief. Thus, while it may be called a new dogma, the only thing new about it is that it is now *explicitly* proposed by the *magisterium*. This exemplifies true dogmatic progress, which does not and cannot suppose a new revelation, but consists only in this: that what was implicit in the faith of the Church is made explicit.

The Apostolic Constitution on the Assumption also sheds new light on the general answer to the question: "Why does the *magisterium* thus propose new dogmas?" That answer is: the Catholic Church with her doctrine is not a static organization; she is a dynamic organism. The Church is organized, but hers is the organization of a living body, not that of an inert mechanical arrangement. Hence, under the provident guidance of the Holy Spirit, the living Church reacts to internal and external influences. In the present case, internal influences occasion the definition in the tremendous growth of devotion to the Blessed Mother of God, a growth clearly born of an increased awareness of

Mary's fulfillment of the role acquired with the cry of Christ from the Cross: "Woman, behold thy son," and an answering eagerness in Catholic hearts to fulfill the consoling duty imposed at the same time: "Son, behold thy mother."⁸

External influences, tending to set the timeliness of this definition, are not far to seek. The very headlines of the daily press, the all-too-common "blurbs" of periodical literature proclaim the tenets of the world against which this truth of the Faith is set in bright relief. The definition affirms the potential sanctity of the human body, its true dignity and value in the eyes of God, at a time when paganism had led to two superficially opposed perversions: a heathen cult of the body on the one hand, a heinous abuse of bodies on the other.

II. DOCUMENTS OF TRADITION

The *magisterium* is the supreme judge in matters of divine faith, the supreme interpreter of the founts of revelation. Only the *magisterium* can judge of the extent or the material object of divine faith, but this does not prevent the *magisterium* from using the rich store of documents from tradition which are in her possession. Though the *magisterium* draws the truth from the deposit of faith which is in her keeping alone, she can call on her Fathers, doctors and theologians to help provide reasoned demonstrations of the truth which she propounds. The motive for assent to a revealed truth will always be the authority of God who revealed the truth. But for the intimate understanding of a revealed truth and of its harmony with reason, the believer will depend upon the theologian, working in union with the *magisterium*.

God illumines, governs, and preserves His Church primarily through the Roman Pontiffs and the bishops of the Church, but He helps His Church by yet other aids. In the first century He gave an abundance of charismatic gifts; in the following centuries, He caused the Fathers of the Church to flourish; in later centuries, He gave the theologians to the Church, Catholic in mind and spirit. The works of the Fathers and theologians, along with the more authentic documents of the *magisterium* (definitions, doctrinal decrees, symbols, encyclical letters, decisions of the biblical commission, catechisms, liturgical books, disciplinary decrees), comprise the documents of tradition.

In the Apostolic Constitution on the dogma of the Assumption these documents of tradition are used to bear witness to the truth of the statement "that it is definitely the business of the theologian to have recourse to Scripture and to tradition, since it is his duty to show how truths set forth in the Church's living *magisterium* are actually to be found, either explicitly or implicitly in these very sources."⁹ The Holy Father asserts that "all these proofs and considerations of the holy Fathers and the theologians are based upon the sacred writings as their ultimate foundation."¹⁰

This avowal enables us to examine with a two-fold purpose the proofs of the Fathers and theologians for the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary given in *Munificentissimus Deus*. First, we can consider the proofs and considerations in the pre-definition stage; secondly, we can seek the new value they receive as a result of the definition.

III. SACRED SCRIPTURE

Before the definition, there was general agreement that the doctrine of the bodily Assumption of the Virgin Mother of God was not set forth explicitly in any text of Sacred Scripture. The Scriptural foundation of the faith in the bodily Assumption of the Virgin Mother of God meant, therefore, that the doctrine was implicitly contained in the texts which the theologians and scripture scholars used. The value of the proof from the various texts differed and was indicated.

The principal texts to which appeal has traditionally been made when seeking Scriptural foundation for the doctrine of the Assumption are the following:

(1) *The Protoevangelium in Genesis*. Many used this text to conclude that since Mary is the woman in *Gen. 3:15*, the victory of Mary foretold in Genesis includes the triumph over death, consisting in the *anticipated* resurrection of the Mother of God, inasmuch as all who triumph with Christ will rise on the last day, conformably to the teaching of Paul. In evaluating this argument, the proof from this text alone was usually considered not to exceed probability, since it is based on the view that Mary is necessarily the woman in *Gen. 3:15* in the *literal sense*, a view to which most authors have hitherto accorded only probability.

(2) *Luke 1:28*. The argument from Luke has hitherto been that the fullness of grace predicated of Mary in this text includes all the graces and privileges of Mary; therefore it includes her Assumption. In determining the value of this view, it was said that some ground for argument was indubitably established, but not enough to give great weight to conclusions based on this text alone.

(3) *Apocalypse 12:1-2*. It was urged that the woman clothed with the sun and with a crown of twelve stars is Mary and that one of her glories is the Assumption. In judging the value of this text for establishing scriptural foundation for the Assumption of the Blessed Mother of God, many accepted the judgment of some impressive exegetes who held that the woman in this text is the Church, and that Mary is the woman in a typical sense. Final judgment on the value of the argument must be left to the Church.

(4) *From many places in Sacred Scripture taken together*. This argument from Scripture first established the title of all the faithful to a bodily resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20-23); it then established that death is a punishment for sin (Rom. 5:12-19; 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:56; Rom. 4:25; and some add Rom. 8:19-23). From these texts, taken together with the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the following argument was constructed: Paul teaches that the resurrection of the body is the final stage of triumph over sin and death; that the *deferring* of this resurrection of the body until the Last Judgment is connected with sin and death—that it is a punishment for serious sin, either personal or original. Implicitly, therefore, it follows that anyone perfectly and completely free from personal and original sin is free from the deferment of the resurrection of the body. Such, of course, is the case of the sinless Virgin and Immaculate Mother of God. There is general agreement that this is the most persuasive of the Scripture arguments, although there has not been complete unanimity among exegetes and biblical theologians on the apodictical value of the argument.

In *Munificentissimus Deus* the documents of tradition (works of the Fathers and theologians) concerning these texts are aptly employed.

Often there are theologians and preachers who, following in the footsteps of the holy Fathers, have been

rather free in their use of events and expressions taken from Sacred Scripture to explain their belief in the Assumption. Thus, to mention a few texts frequently cited in this fashion, some have employed the words of the Psalmist: "Arise, O Lord, into the resting place; thou and the ark which thou hast sanctified";¹¹ and have looked upon the *Ark of the Covenant*, built of incorruptible wood and placed in the Lord's temple, as a type of the most pure body of the Virgin Mary, preserved and exempted from all the corruption of the tomb and raised up to such glory in heaven.¹²

Scholastic doctors had recognized the Assumption as:

Something signified not only in various figures of the Old Testament, but also in that woman clothed with the sun, whom John the Apostle contemplated on the Island of Patmos. Similarly they have given special attention to these words of the New Testament: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women," since they saw in the mystery of the Assumption the fulfillment of that perfect grace granted to the Blessed Virgin and the special blessing that countered the curse of Eve.¹³

Later we read "holy writers . . . at that time employed statements and various images and analogies of Sacred Scripture to illustrate and to confirm the doctrine of the Assumption . . ."¹⁴ and St. Anthony of Padua is specifically cited for his use of the text from the Psalmist quoted above. St. Albert the Great's use of the text in *Luke* 1.28 is also mentioned. The clear Scripture foundation for the dogmas of the Divine Motherhood and the virginity of Mary are used by the Fathers and theologians to shed further light on the texts which they use in connection with their expositions of the Assumption.

The other scriptural texts, traditionally used as foundations for the

doctrine of the bodily Assumption, are mentioned in connection with the theological demonstration of the truth of the Assumption. The text in the Constitution is:

We must remember especially that since the Second Century the Virgin Mary has been designated by the holy Fathers as the new Eve, who although subject to the new Adam, is most intimately associated with Him in the struggle against the infernal foe which, as foretold in the protoevangelium, finally resulted in that most complete victory over sin and death, always mentioned together in the writings of the Apostle of the Gentiles. (References are given to *Gen.* 3:15; *Rom.* 5 and 6; *Cor.* 15:21-26, 54-57.) Consequently, just as the glorious resurrection of Christ was an essential part and the final sign of this victory, so that struggle which was common to the Blessed Virgin and her Divine Son should be brought to a close by the glorification of her virginal body, for the same Apostle says: "When this mortal thing hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."¹⁵

Thus the Constitution brings that argument from Scripture, which had been acknowledged as strongest before the definition, into close connection with the consideration of the harmony of this dogma with other revealed truths. Further, since these texts serve as a scriptural foundation for the defense of this truth, "which has been expounded and explained magnificently in the work, the science and the wisdom of the theologians,"¹⁶ the definition of the bodily Assumption of the Virgin Mother of God adds force to the proofs formerly used, in view of the repeated declaration that "this truth is based on the Sacred Writings. . . ." At the same time, the statement that some "have been rather free in their use of events and expressions taken from Sacred Scripture," and that they "employed statements and various images and

analogies of Sacred Scripture to illustrate and to confirm the doctrine of the Assumption," sufficiently manifest that the *accommodated* sense of sacred texts has not the demonstrative value of the *typical sense* and much less of the *literal sense*. New value accrues to a text when the *magisterium* leads us to see more clearly how a truth is contained implicitly in Scripture and in tradition.

IV. THEOLOGICAL DEMONSTRATION

The function of the theologian in attempting to derive particular truths from the sources of revelation and to show that a particular truth is revealed and could be proposed for belief by the *magisterium* is well illustrated in the theological demonstration of the truth of the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Again, we will present the argument as it was commonly given in the seminary classes *before the definition*, then cite pertinent parts *in the definition*.

Before the definition, the doctrine that the Blessed Virgin Mary was assumed body and soul into the glory of heaven was held as *proxima fidei* or *definibilis*. It was taught as implicitly contained in other revealed truths and the proofs followed familiar lines.

First Proof. There exists in the Church a widespread and weighty tradition concerning the Assumption of the Virgin. The only sufficient reason for the existence of that tradition, particularly in view of the Church's unailing office of safeguarding the deposit of faith, is the apostolic origin of a revealed doctrine that after Mary's life-course was completed, she was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory. This is, substantially, the proof from the ordinary doctrinal authority of the Church.

Second Proof. This involves the theological content of three truths in which the Assumption is implicitly contained: (1) Mary was associated with her Son in the victory over the devil, over sin and death; (2) Mary's Immaculate Conception, her freedom from original sin at the moment of her conception; (3) Mary's virginity in the birth of Christ. The first proposition was usually established in dogma classes by reasoning from the Bull *Ineffabilis*, and the allusive argument from Genesis was confirmed by the comparisons in patristic writings between Mary and Eve, as well as the association of Mary with her Divine Son in the

victory over the devil.¹⁷ The second proposition is defined Catholic doctrine.¹⁸ So is the third.¹⁹

Careful analysis of the concept of "victory over sin and death" reveals that this does not exclude the separation of body and soul, death in the ordinary understanding of the term. Christ, who was all-holy, "yielded the ghost" and died on Calvary. But it does exclude the corruption of the body in the grave, permanence in death. Hence the victory of the sinless Virgin Mary over death could consist only in the "anticipated resurrection" of her body, so that all corruption and all permanence in death might be prevented. Christ achieved this victory by His own power and through His own merits; His Blessed Mother shared this triumph through the merit of her Divine Son and by His divine power.

All through the history of the Church, in the writings of the Fathers and the theologians, the Divine Motherhood of the Blessed Virgin Mary has been stressed as the fountainhead of all her privileges and prerogatives. For many centuries, the virginity of the Blessed Mother of God was esteemed to be the chief doctrine in which the truth of the Assumption was implicitly contained. With the definition of the Immaculate Conception new light was brought to bear on the sources of the faith of the Church in the bodily Assumption of the Virgin Mary into heavenly glory. In this new light, it was seen more clearly than ever before that there was marvelous harmony in the revealed truths and that the Assumption was implicit in the Immaculate Conception.²⁰

In *Munificentissimus Deus* all these received proofs are presented. In the quotation cited in connection with the Scripture proof, Mary is presented as the new Eve closely associated with the new Adam in His struggle against the infernal foe. As the Resurrection of Christ was an essential part and conclusive sign of His victory, so the "anticipated resurrection," the glorification of Mary's virginal body, brought to a close the struggle that was common to her and to her Divine Son.²¹

Hence the revered Mother of God, from all eternity joined in a hidden way with Jesus Christ in one and the same degree of predestination, immaculate in her conception, a most perfect virgin in her divine motherhood, the noble associate of the divine Redeemer who

has won a complete triumph over sin and its consequences, was finally granted, as the supreme culmination of her privileges, that she should be preserved free from the corruption of the tomb and that, like her own Son, having overcome death, she might be taken up body and soul to the glory of heaven where, as Queen, she sits in splendor at the right hand of her own Son, the immortal King of the Ages.²²

Thus, all that is clearest and most cogent in the arguments of the theologians is incorporated into one magnificent paragraph from which shines forth the glory of Mary in her Assumption.

In the Constitution we find also a pertinent application of the famous *potuit, deuit, fecit* argument. The order is changed slightly, since the fittingness is first presented.

These (the proofs of Fathers and theologians) set the revered Mother of God as it were before our very eyes as most intimately joined to her divine Son and as always sharing His lot. Consequently, it seems impossible to think of her, the one who conceived Christ, brought Him forth, gave Him milk, held Him in her arms, and fondled Him at her breast, as being apart from Him in body even though not in soul. Since our Redeemer is the Son of Mary, He could not do otherwise, as the perfect observer of God's law, than to honor, not only His eternal Father, but also His most beloved Mother. And, since it was within His power to grant her this great honor, to preserve her from the corruption of the tomb, we must believe that He really acted in this way.²³

The Constitution also directly associates this privilege of Mary's anticipated resurrection and glory with the privilege of her Immaculate Conception.

Yet, according to His general rule, God does not will to grant the full effect of the victory over death to the just until the end of time shall have come. And so it is that the bodies of even the just are corrupted and that only on the last day will they be joined, each to its own glorious soul. Now God has willed that the Blessed Virgin Mary should be exempted from this general rule. She, by an entirely unique privilege, completely overcame sin in her Immaculate Conception, and as a result she was not subject to the law of remaining in the corruption of the grave, and she did not have to wait until the end of time for the resurrection of her Body.²⁴

The fruitful labor of theologians in the past, now so solemnly approved by the *magisterium* in this solemn definition, should be an incentive to theologians of the future to continue to investigate, at the bidding and under the sure guidance of the *magisterium*, the riches contained in the deposit of faith entrusted by Christ to His Church.

V. THE LITURGY

In the present Constitution another demonstration is taken from the Liturgy. At the same time an excellent appraisal of the value of the argument from the Liturgy is made. The familiar *lex orandi, lex credendi* has a new clarification in the following statement: "...the sacred liturgy, because it is the profession, subject to the supreme teaching authority in the Church, of heavenly truths, can supply proofs and testimonies of no small value for deciding any individual point of Christian doctrine."²⁵ And, further on:

However, since the liturgy of the Church does not engender the Catholic faith, but rather springs from it, in such a way that the practices of sacred worship proceed from the Faith as the fruit comes from the tree, it follows that the holy Fathers and the great

Doctors, in the homilies and sermons they gave the people on this feast day, did not draw their teachings from the feast itself as from a primary source, but rather they spoke of this doctrine as something already known and accepted by Christ's faithful.²⁶

If we join to these citations the words "... and the concordant faith of the Christian people which the same doctrinal authority (ordinary doctrinal authority of Church) sustains and directs..."²⁷ we have a clearer indication of the theological value of the Liturgy and of the consent of the faithful, inasmuch as both spring from the Church herself, teaching, directing, sustaining and nourishing the life of the *Ecclesia discens*.

Hence, the existence of the Feast of the Assumption in the Church for so many centuries and the lively place of this truth in the hearts of the faithful from time immemorial attest to the fidelity with which the Church fulfills her office of nurturing the flock of Christ with the doctrine Christ taught. Inevitably great solace and strength have always come from devotion based on knowledge of the privileges of the Blessed Mother, a knowledge flowering into tremendous love of Mary and into hope that hearts loving her may become more like the Sacred Heart of Jesus, model of Mary's own heart. The study of the demonstration from the Liturgy and the consent of the faithful is all the more appealing, since the definition of the dogma of the Assumption was occasioned, not by attacks on the Church from without nor by any sharp difference of opinion among Catholics themselves, but by the overflow of the vigorous devotional life which the Church herself has fostered.

VI. SUMMARY

The best summary of the matters treated, all too briefly, in this theological commentary on the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* is to be found in the words of the Holy Father in the Constitution itself.

Since the Universal Church, within which dwells the Spirit of Truth Who infallibly directs it towards ever

more perfect knowledge of revealed truths, has expressed its own belief many times over the course of the centuries, and since the Bishops of the entire world have almost unanimously petitioned that the truth of the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven should be defined as a dogma of divine and Catholic faith—this truth which is based on the Sacred Writings; which is thoroughly rooted in the minds of the faithful; which has been approved in ecclesiastical worship from the most remote times; which is completely in harmony with other revealed truths, and which has been expounded and explained magnificently in the work, the science and the wisdom of the theologians—we believe that the moment appointed in the plan of divine providence for the solemn proclamation of this conspicuous privilege of the Virgin Mary has already arrived.²⁸

In this commentary, we have considered the foundation of the dogma of the Assumption in the sacred writings; culled from *Munificentissimus Deus* the proper value of the arguments from the consent of the faithful and from the Liturgy; and indicated the harmony of this doctrine with other revealed truths particularly with the virginity and Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Mother of God. Further, we have elaborated the use of the documents of tradition by the *magisterium*, arriving at the crowning of all the work of the Fathers, doctors and theologians of the Church in the solemn definition of the dogma of the Assumption by the *magisterium*, as it is vested in the Roman Pontiff when he speaks for the whole Church.

Now that the dogma of the Assumption has been defined, it is interesting to recall the considerations which entered theological discussions after the letter *Deiparae Virginis Mariae* and immediately before the definition. There was general agreement that the preparatory work for the definition had been exhaustively done. All agreed, too, that the

heavenly glorification of the soul of the Blessed Virgin Mary could not be questioned, since her exalted holiness, her fulness of grace and her complete freedom from sin guaranteed that her soul was glorified at the moment of her death. Similarly, there was unanimity on the point that the complete concept of the Assumption involved (a) the death of the Blessed Virgin Mary; (b) the resurrection, the reuniting of the soul and body of the Blessed Mother of God; and (c) the translation and heavenly glorification of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, body and soul. Finally, it was clear that the faith of the Church regarded primarily this last element. In the theological discussion, three questions were asked and answered. The questions asked were: (1) could the dogma of the Assumption be defined? (2) why could the dogma of the Assumption be defined? (3) would the death of the Blessed Virgin be included in the definition?²⁹

The answers to these questions generally were (1) yes; (2) because it is implicitly revealed; (3) though the death of the Blessed Virgin is certain, it probably would not be included in the definition but would be mentioned in a preamble.

Now in *Munificentissimus Deus* the Holy Father solemnly defines, as a divinely revealed dogma, "that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory."³⁰ Earlier he had referred to the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven as a truth "which surely no faculty of the human mind could know by its own natural powers, as far as the heavenly glorification of the virginal body of the revered Mother of God is concerned..."³¹ thus making this truth the partial direct object of the definition. Concerning the death of the Virgin Mary, after recalling the cares, hardships and sorrows of Our Lady's life, the Holy Father cites the fulfillment of Simeon's prophecy in the sword which pierced Mary's heart as she stood under the cross of her divine Son, and then adds these words: "In the same way it was not difficult for them to affirm that the great Mother of God, like her only begotten Son, had actually passed from this life."³² Thus the tentative conclusion of most theologians that the death of the Blessed Virgin, though certain, would not be placed directly and explicitly in the definition seems still to be valid.

From these reflections theologians now hard at work in research and lecturing may well draw fresh inspiration and new vigor, with an eager re-dedication to those positive studies and speculative inquiries which their truly sublime office demands of them. They will be humbly gratified by the paternal accolade that the Holy Father has given their part in preparing the *Ecclesia discens* and aiding the *Ecclesia docens* for this historic definition of the Assumption, a doctrine "which has been expounded and explained magnificently in the work, the science and the wisdom of the theologians. . . ." ³³

¹ All the citations are from the English translation of *Munificentissimus Deus* by the Rev. Dr. Joseph Clifford Fenton, Editor of *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, issued by the NCWC News Service, Nov. 15, 1950. This citation, p. 14.

² Vatican Council, Constitution *Dei Filius*, c. 3.

³ *Ineffabilis Deus*, *Acta Pii IX*, Pars 1, 1, 615.

⁴ NCWC translation, p. 3.

⁵ Cf. *American Ecclesiastical Review*, CXXIII, 5 (Nov. 1950), 369.

⁶ NCWC translation, p. 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *John* 19:26-27.

⁹ *American Ecclesiastical Review*, *loc. cit.*

¹⁰ NCWC translation, p. 12.

¹¹ *Psalm* 131:8.

¹² NCWC translation, p. 8.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 12 f.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ineffabilis* and NCWC translation, p. 12.

¹⁸ *Ineffabilis*.

¹⁹ Cf. Symbols, etc.

²⁰ *Passim* in the NCWC translation.

²¹ NCWC translation, pp. 12-13.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁹ Cf. "The Definability of Mary's Assumption," Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M., *American Ecclesiastical Review*, CXVIII, 3 (March 1948).

³⁰ NCWC translation, p. 14.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

BEINGS OF PRAISE

by

GERALD VANN, O.P.

FATHER VANN, an eminent Dominican author and lecturer, was born in England in 1906. He received degrees from Oxford and the Angelicum, and was head master at Laxton, English Dominican school, for almost twenty years, combining this work with writing, lecturing, and giving of conferences and retreats.

Father Vann is noted for his ability to "shake our religious reactions out of the rut of habit by a vivid insight." He is the author of many books, including *Eve and the Gryphon*, *The Divine Pity*, *The Heart of Man*, *The Water and the Fire*, and *The Seven Swords*, a study of the sorrows of Our Lady.

BEINGS OF PRAISE

by

GERALD VANN, O.P.

WHY SHOULD the doctrine of Our Lady's Assumption, which has been accepted and celebrated all these centuries, be defined by the Church only recently? There is one answer which suggests itself and which we can with profit consider.

It is part of the Church's redemptive work to exorcize and sanctify material things and consecrate them to the worship of God and the healing of man. For things can be either beneficent or maleficent, as the sea is now cruel, treacherous, angry, destructive; now gentle, pacific, a joy-bringer. There is Satanic evil in the world, to make things inimical to man; but man, for his part, through the power of goodness, is meant to drive out the evil, as when a man domesticates a wild animal and, above all, as when the Church turns water, salt, wine, oil, to the bringing of divine life into the world.

But man, instead of healing the material world, can pour his own evil into it. And today, perhaps more than ever before, matter is being used precisely to degrade humanity. Torture and drugs are being used to destroy not only men's bodies but their personalities; you think of the appalling horror of the concentration camps; of the way the beauty of the earth is turned into ugliness: the slums and tenements, the commercialisms, the use of the arts of man to drag down the spirit. And all this on such a scale that it would be easy to despair of the future, easy to see humanity as rushing headlong like the Gadarene swine to destruction.

It is just at this moment that the Church affirms the dignity of matter, the glory of human flesh and blood; just at this moment that it affirms the bodily glorifying of Mary as though to encourage us anew—for in

her glory (she is not divine like her Son but purely human) matter is sanctified, human flesh is sanctified, and her glory is to be the guarantee of ours. It is as though the Church were in effect saying: this degradation is not in fact final; the gates of hell shall not prevail. And so the evil will be conquered, the ugliness will pass away, the earth will be renewed.

But what, in practical terms, does this mean for us? It means, first of all, that we have to fight against anything in our own lives that would degrade us through a destructive use of matter, of material things. Everything that lures senses away from spirit, that makes us sensual, torpid, sluggish, greedy, gross; everything that drags us down to earthiness when we should be climbing up to God; everything that makes us destructive—anger, avarice, lust—when we should be creative; all these things have to be fought if the promise of the Assumption is to be fulfilled in us.

But we should be thus concerned with ourselves only as part of something much greater—the battle for the redemption of matter as a whole in cooperation with the redemptive power and purposes of God.

Wherever in the world there is ugliness, squalor, degradation, cruelty, there is need of the power of the Spirit, mediated through men, to heal and renew. The abolition of ugliness might seem to be a purely esthetic preoccupation; it is not. A human personality will not easily grow to its proper stature in an environment of ugliness and squalor.

The attempt to restore to man the dignity of labor by restoring labor itself—from the idea of a money-gaining "job" to that of a creative vocation—is of theological importance.

And it is of theological importance that we should learn again how to wonder at things and, therefore, reverence them; and if you fight against the degrading of language (the jargon of the bureaucrat, the vulgarity of a type of journalism), of painting (the sordid advertisements, the commercialized sex), of music, of building, of politics, of conversation, of social manners and customs, you are fighting for the dignity of human flesh and blood and therefore answering the challenge of the Church's definition of the Assumption.

The same is obviously still more true, and the task still more urgent, when you come to the great issues: social justice; the abolition of

penury and want; education and culture; sex and marriage; political regimentation.

And, finally, the same is true when you come to those personal ideals for which Christianity stands but which are nowadays so often treated with contempt; the qualities which restore something of the original harmony between flesh and spirit: moderation, self-control, purity, gentleness, graciousness, candor, that cleanness of heart to which is promised the vision of God.

The Church's definition is an affirmation of the dignity of human nature in its wholeness, of human love and passion, of material beauty. It affirms for us again the fact that all the works of God's hands are sacraments, singing to us of His glory, beckoning us to His presence. It calls to us to insure, so far as we are able, that the works of man's hands, too, and all his use of material things and his own flesh shall similarly praise God through beauty and dignity and so help man himself to become, what he ought essentially to be, a "being of praise."

RADIANCE IN ROME
by
FRANCES PARKINSON KEYES

MRS. KEYES was born in 1885 at the University of Virginia, where her father was a professor of Greek. She married Henry Wilder Keyes in 1904, and was a Washington hostess during her husband's term of office in the Senate, 1919-1937. A year after her husband's death in 1938, Mrs. Keyes entered the Catholic Church.

Although her four popular religious works, *Therese, Saint of a Little Way*, *Bernadette of Lourdes*, *The Grace of Guadalupe*, and *Saint Anne, Grandmother of Our Saviour*, have reached a large reading public, Mrs. Keyes is best known for her novels, many of which have sold more than a million copies each in the United States alone.

RADIANCE IN ROME
by
FRANCES PARKINSON KEYES

I BELIEVED, as I left St. Peter's on the day of Mother Cabrini's canonization, that I should not live to see another woman so greatly honored, and with such abundant reason.

But I was wrong. I was yet to see another woman even more greatly honored, and not because she is the loving and merciful Mother of all mankind—though this is one of her most moving attributes, but because she is also the Mother of God.

For I was again in Rome when Pius XII performed an action for which there is only one completely parallel precedent in the history of the Church; I was privileged to hear him promulgate the dogma of the Assumption.

Of course this declaration marked a culmination, both in actuality and in symbolism, of the functions which I associate with St. Peter's; but it also marked a culmination of other impressions and experiences, both intensely personal and greatly varied. Ever since that first long-ago visit to Italy, I have had in my bedroom a photograph of Titian's superb painting, representing the Assumption of the Virgin; and I chose this photograph myself, and paid for it, as I did all the purchases I made at that time, from an allowance of 25¢ a week. My mother, puzzled by such a choice on the part of a child ten years old, asked me if I was sure I would rather not save my money for something else; and when I said No, she asked me why. My answer still seems to be adequate and convincing. "It is such a hopeful picture," I said. "Everyone is looking or moving upward toward God. And there is a great light."

I have always continued to feel that way about this picture; it is the one to which I have turned oftenest for encouragement and refreshment

throughout the years; and perhaps it is because it has meant so much to me from a tender age that the various celebrations of the feast of the Assumption which I have seen, in different parts of the world, have all been associated in my mind with hopefulness and light and a spontaneous approach to God. There is the Palio in Siena, when all the city reverts to medieval magnificence, when races are run in the great square after the horses taking part in it have been led into the parish churches to be blessed, and the wonderful mosaics in the pavement of the cathedral are all uncovered, and a famous choir comes to sing golden music in the light that comes from the golden altar. There is the service in the tiny chapel—allegedly the smallest in the world—on the River road near Bayou Goula in Louisiana, where the worshipers sit on the banks of the levee, because there is no room for them in the sanctuary. This Assumption-day Mass is the only one offered in the chapel each year, and people come to it from far and wide, in high creaking buggies, in sugar carts, in trucks and busses along the River road, and in all sorts of small boats on the Mississippi itself. They kneel in the grass and sing looking up to the sky. There is the procession of young, white-clad girls at Cuernavaca, winding its way, under the light of a full moon, through a stone courtyard to a little old church, where an image of the Virgin, all shrouded, has been realistically laid to rest in a white, flower-banked coffin, which the girls surround, singing sweet mournful sounds. But the next morning, though the coffin is still there, it is empty except for the shroud, and the image of the Virgin, richly robed, rises triumphant above a lighted shrine.

I could go on for a long time like this; so it is perhaps partly because I have cherished that picture of the Assumption nearly all my life, and partly because I have seen the feast of the Assumption celebrated in so many different ways, in so many different parts of the world, but always with intensity of faith and devotion, that it seemed to be such a supreme privilege to be in Rome at this time and that I was personally quite unprepared for the protests against the present proclamation which came from certain alien groups and still more unprepared for their tone of surprise and shock. And, after all, my feeling in the matter cannot be wholly personal. The proclamation involved no new truth; it merely gave new status to an old one. The feast of the Assumption has been

a holyday of obligation for a long, long time; and the decision to define the dogma of the Assumption was not a sudden one; it had been under consideration for many years, it had been eagerly and insistently petitioned. "In a wonderful and almost unanimous chorus," the Pope declared, speaking to the great consistory of 35 cardinals and more than 500 bishops who had assembled in Rome, "the voices of the pastors and the faithful from every part of the world reached us, professing the same faith and requesting the same thing as supremely desired by all. We judged then that there was no reason for further delay. Nor is it without the will of divine Providence that this happy event comes during the Holy Year."

The celebration of this "happy event" began on the eve of the promulgation, when a procession which started at the Altar of Heaven church on Capitoline hill wound its way through the streets of Rome to the piazza of St. Peter's. There, looking down upon the mighty gathering from his study window, the Pope recited for the first time the prayer he had composed in honor of the occasion: "O Immaculate Virgin, Mother of God and Mother of men, we believe with all the fervor of our faith in thy triumphant assumption, in soul and in body, into heaven, where thou art acclaimed Queen by all the choirs of the angels and by all the legions of the saints . . . and we, who invoke thee as our Mother, we take thee, as did John, for guide, strength and consolation in our mortal life."

Through the never-failing courtesy and resourcefulness of an Italian friend, Fausto Bornigia, I was privileged to watch this procession from a window high in the Palazzo Valiani, on the Corso Vittorio Emmanuele, very close to the place where it formed; and, in every respect, it was the most impressive spectacle of the kind which I have ever beheld. From the windows of nearly every building in sight richly colored hangings had been flung; and, on these, the people who filled the windows rested their arms as they leaned out to watch. Below, the sidewalks were thronged with onlookers: small children watched over by nuns, groups of older schoolgirls, nursing mothers quite unabashed by their complete lack of privacy, family parties, the gilded youth of high society, out in rollicking but not irreverent mood, all sorts and conditions of men. Yet complete order reigned. The Roman police, unfailingly courteous and

efficient, had no trouble in keeping these crowds in order; and, once the procession itself was under way, these multitudes seemed dwarfed in size.

It was led by a large contingent of Boy Scouts, and other juvenile groups followed close behind them, among these the Children of Mary in their blue and white. Then came one lay organization after another, some in drab and shabby garments, some in sober but neat attire, others gaily caparisoned: middle-aged men, university students in bright *tricornes*, pilgrims from every province in Italy and numerous foreign countries, all proclaiming their origin on large placards, many carrying lighted candles or revered images or both, many more singing.

On and on they came, to the sound of their own voices and the music of the bands which occasionally intercepted them, until it seemed as if there had been an outpouring from the whole world; and still the procession was hardly under way. The seminarians and secular priests were yet to come, the mendicant monks and barefoot friars, the missionaries and nursing Brothers, the dignitaries of the Eastern Church in rich robes and towering headdresses, the nuns of countless Orders in a bewildering variety of habits, until those of us who were watching together said to each other, "Surely this must be the beginning of the end!" But still we were mistaken.

Finally, in the distance, we glimpsed a candelighted stream of scarlet which seemed to flow, in a single, wide even band down the broad street. As it came closer, we saw that it was made up of men, the princes and primates of the Church. At their head walked the Camerlengo, preceding the flower-wreathed picture of the Virgin, painted, according to fond tradition, by St. Luke, which was being borne in triumph from the Church of Ara Coeli, where it forms the altar piece, to the Basilica of St. Peter, where it was to be exposed to the veneration of the faithful during five days. Immediately in its rear came two cardinals, their scarlet robes floating out behind them, and, after these, the archbishops and the bishops, more than 500 strong.

Did I say that this was the most impressive spectacle of the kind that I had ever beheld? Then that was an understatement. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it was the most impressive spectacle of the kind that anyone has ever beheld.

"This day so long invoked finally is ours and yours," the Pope declared, speaking from his throne to the throng in the piazza of St. Peter's the following morning. He had made his supreme declaration: "We pronounce, declare and define to be a dogma revealed by God that the Immaculate Mother of God, Mary, ever Virgin, when the course of her life on earth was finished, was taken up body and soul into heaven." And, as he finished speaking, cries and cheers of "*Viva! Viva!*" had risen in a surge of sound from the place where he stood to the Castel San Angelo, which is nearly a mile away. When the mighty flow had changed to a murmuring ebb, he raised his voice again in the first words of the *Te Deum*, and the Sistine choir took up the song of thanksgiving. Then the hundreds and thousands joined with them, and the bells began to ring, the giant bells of St. Peter's and the bells of all the churches in Rome. And now the sound seemed not only to surge through the city, but to reach the very vault of heaven.

This was how it still seemed as the Pontiff, borne aloft on his portable throne, left the piazza for the basilica. On this occasion, my seat was directly in front of the high altar; so I could watch the stately progress of the great cortege as it advanced toward this luminous sanctuary, while the shouts of "*Viva il Papa! Viva il Papa!*" still echoed on every side, from the raised tribunes where the high officials were seated, from the benches set aside for lesser personages, from the great sections of nave and transept where thousands were standing. The Pope, wearing a white cope embroidered in gold, which fell in rich folds around his slender form, sat erect on his throne, his right arm raised, his outstretched fingers moving in blessing. Above him floated a silken canopy; around him marched his guards; on either side towered the feathered *flabella*.¹ Then came the cardinals in their scarlet robes, the Eastern patriarchs with their jewel-studded mitres, the archbishops and the bishops. And, high above them all, from the lofty pillar where it had been placed, St. Luke's portrait of the Virgin, flower-framed and candle-lighted, looked benignly down.

It was early morning when the proclamation ceremonies began, high noon before the Mass was over. But the celebration had not ended, even then. The Pope, who had expressed joy at the "splendid light" of Holy Year, had asked that, on this night of nights, the "splendid light" should

be made manifest in an outward and visible form of an inward and spiritual grace; and all Rome had responded to his request. The facade of every church was magnificently illumined and every ancient monument, every public building, every sparkling fountain was bathed in light. Colored lanterns hung at the street corners; lamps hanging from private houses gleamed behind paper shades; little shrines were all aglow. The Colosseum was encircled with glittering bands, the Forum was flooded with luminosity. The Castel San Angelo was not only wreathed in light: one entire side of it was dominated by lights in the form of a cross. Torches flickered and flamed above the vast colonnade in St. Peter's square, and the square itself was a great area of splendor. Radiance in Rome had become an immense glory, honoring the Mother of God.

Or was it her glory, shining from the sky, that made the Eternal City into a city of light to brighten our darkness and show us the way of truth?

¹ The *flabella* are shaped like fans, but are attached to long poles which hold them aloft.

MARY'S DEATH
by
JUNIPER B. CAROL, O.F.M.

FATHER CAROL, America's foremost Mariologist, was born in Cardenas, Cuba, in 1911, and was educated in Havana, Washington, and Rome, where he received his doctorate in sacred theology in 1950. He was ordained to the priesthood as a member of the Order of Friars Minor in 1935, and has been on the faculties of Siena College and St. Bonaventure University.

In 1950 Father Carol founded the now flourishing Mariological Society of America and served as its president for four years. He is now secretary of the organization and edits the society's publication, *Marian Studies*. In 1950 he was the recipient of the Marianist Award, given each year by the University of Dayton for outstanding work in promoting the glory of Mary.

Father Carol is editing a three-volume Mariology by American scholars. His own best known work is *De Corredemptione Beatae Mariae Virginis*, a six-hundred-page exhaustive treatment of Mary's part in the Redemption. His *Fundamentals of Mariology* was published in 1956.

MARY'S DEATH

by

JUNIPER B. CAROL, O.F.M.

AMONG THE numerous questions claiming the attention of Catholic theologians in recent years, perhaps none has been the object of a more animated debate than the one relative to Our Lady's death. Several factors have contributed to bring this problem to the fore particularly within the last century, but the most important was undoubtedly the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception by Pope Pius IX in 1854. The centennial of this memorable pronouncement, plus the definition of Mary's Assumption in 1950, have furnished students of the sacred sciences with a golden opportunity to ventilate again this question with new verve and enthusiasm.

It is easily recognized that the point under discussion is far from being as simple as it might appear on the surface. It is, rather, a difficult and complex problem; one which has made taxing demands on the talent and learning of our most able scholars because it has a definite bearing on some rather intricate and highly technical phases of the science of theology.

The question of Mary's death may be approached and studied from several angles (for example, the teaching of the Magisterium, the data furnished by Sacred Scripture or Tradition, etc.), but the scope of this study has been purposely restricted to one specific angle, namely, that of the Immaculate Conception. Briefly and clearly stated, the central point around which our discussion revolves is this: did the Immaculate Conception confer on Our Lady a right to bodily immortality? If so, did Our Lady surrender the right, or did she actually escape death?

In answer to these questions several opinions are now being circulated by those who have made a serious study of the problem. They may be reduced to the four following groups:

(A) The first group holds that Our Blessed Lady was immortal both *de jure* and *de facto*. In other words, she had a right to escape death and actually escaped it. This view is defended by a few, though learned, modern theologians, among whom we may mention D. Arnaldi, T. Gallus and G. M. Roschini.¹

(B) The second group (which partially coincides with the first) holds that, while Our Lady did have a right to immortality, she nevertheless willingly surrendered it and actually died. This opinion is supported by not a few distinguished scholars such as Cardinal Lépicier, J. M. Bover, R. O'Connell, C. Koser and B. Kloppenburg.²

(C) The third group (diametrically opposed to the first) contends that Our Blessed Lady not only actually died, but that she never had a right to be exempt from the law of death. This view, which is shared by the vast majority of Catholic theologians, has been vigorously championed in recent years by C. Balic, J. F. Bonnefoy, E. Sauras and several others.³

(D) The fourth opinion, recently introduced by A. Mancini, holds that Our Blessed Lady, while subject to the law of death, nevertheless did not actually die in the proper sense of the word. There was no separation of the soul from the body; there was merely a transition from a lower to a higher form of life.⁴

It is important to note that each of the above opinions has a twofold aspect, or if you will, two elements which are totally different, namely: the *quaestio juris* and the *quaestio facti*. Being or not being subject to a law, and fulfilling or not fulfilling that law, are two entirely different things, although closely connected in the concrete order.

It is hardly necessary to remark at this point that the solution to the problem being debated among these various groups depends largely, if not wholly, on one's personal views concerning the nature of the nexus between sin and death on the one hand, and between immunity from sin and immortality on the other. It is precisely the nature of that nexus that will furnish the key to the settlement of the controversy. This seems to be, in the last analysis, the only possible approach to the problem, at least from a speculative point of view. All other issues may be considered "side-issues" and will ultimately lead us back to the fundamental question which remains: what is the nature of the nexus between sin and death?

And it stands to reason that since there is no agreement among theologians on this primary point, there can be no agreement either on the related question of Mary's death or immortality.

Let us now proceed to outline briefly the arguments advanced by the various groups in favor of their respective thesis. Since the fourth opinion has not made much of an impression among theologians, we may be permitted to pass it over in silence and concentrate on the remaining three.

One of the most ardent exponents of the first opinion is the Very Rev. Gabriel M. Roschini, O.S.M., whose competence as a Mariologist is known the world over. We summarize his views as expressed in his most recent book *La Madonna nella fede e la teologia*.⁵ The author argues as follows: In the present order of things, death is the penal consequence of sin. That much is clear from Sacred Scripture (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 5:12). Where there is no guilt of sin, there can be no punishment for sin. Now, since Our Blessed Lady was completely preserved from the guilt of original sin by reason of her Immaculate Conception, it follows logically that she must have been preserved also from the necessity of incurring the punishment of sin, namely, death. Hence Mary's immortality is not only a dogmatic fact, but it is also formally implicitly revealed in the dogma of her Immaculate Conception.⁶ The author further corroborates his reasoning by appealing to a canon of the Second Council of Orange (529) according to which, if anyone claims that "(corporal) death alone, which is the punishment of sin, and not sin itself . . . was transmitted through one man to the entire human race, he attributes an injustice to God. . . ." Moreover, continues the author, in his encyclical *Munificentissimus Deus* (1950), Pope Pius XII, expressly states that, owing to the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady was not subject to the law of remaining in the corruption of the grave like the rest of men. From this we may logically infer that the privilege of the Immaculate Conception gave Our Lady a right to immortality and preserved her from actually dying.⁸

The theologians of the second group heartily agree with the first claim made by Roschini, but emphatically reject the second. Impressed by the tremendous weight of Tradition in favor of Mary's death, these men naturally refuse to deny that fact. On the other hand, they are impressed

also by the canon of the Second Council of Orange relative to the nexus between original sin and the general law of death. Hence, they adopt a middle position which may be summarized as follows: The Immaculate Conception did confer on Our Lady a right (or quasi-right) not to die; her preservation from original sin automatically placed her outside the universal law of death. Nevertheless, she actually underwent death, not as a result of a sin she did not personally contract, but for reasons of a higher order, namely, to fulfill her mission as Coredemptrix of the human race.⁹

As indicated above the theologians of the third group in this controversy decidedly reject the twofold claim made by the first group. Since this happens to be the view of our personal preference (at least tentatively) we may be permitted to enlarge somewhat on it. In our opinion, no amount of speculative reasoning can rule out the fact of Mary's death which has been universally believed in the Catholic Church for so many centuries. As to the so-called right to immortality, we feel that it has never been proved convincingly. How do we attempt to establish our case? In order to follow the line of reasoning, we must bear in mind the basic argument brought forth by the adversaries. The latter claim, as you recall, that death is the necessary effect of original sin personally contracted and that, since Our Lady was conceived without original sin, she was, therefore, immortal *de jure*; and since there was no sufficient reason for her giving up that right, she was immortal also *de facto*.

We begin by pointing out that from the Immaculate Conception one may infer only one thing, namely, that Mary's death could not have been in punishment for original sin personally contracted; one may not infer, in good logic, that Mary was not subject to death and actually died for some other reason.¹⁰ For example, the single fact that Our Lady received from her parents a human body which was inherently mortal may be rightly considered a sufficient reason postulating her death. Let us elaborate further on this premise which embodies the very antithesis of the Roschini theory.

By its very nature the human body is, and always has been, subject to the law of death. The scientific reason for this is that the human body, in its essential structure, is an organic composite of heterogeneous ele-

ments which, obeying chemico-biological laws, automatically tend to dissolution. Almighty God being the Author of nature may, of course, if He so desires, suspend the fulfillment of the laws of nature by a special divine intervention. In this event the immortality of the human body would be, obviously, a gratuitous gift of God and never an exigency of nature as such.¹¹

As a matter of fact, Almighty God did not leave man in a purely natural order. In His infinite goodness and liberality He raised man to a higher sphere, to an order above nature, by placing him from the very beginning in what is technically known as the state of original justice. Essentially, this state of original justice consisted in the *supernatural* gift of sanctifying grace and the consequent right to the beatific vision; to this God had *de facto* attached the *preternatural* gifts, namely: immunity from concupiscence, immunity from ignorance, immunity from suffering and immunity from death. All these preternatural gifts (and therefore the gifts of immortality) were to be enjoyed not only by Adam himself, but also by all his descendants on condition that Adam remain faithful to God's command. Unfortunately, Adam did sin and God withdrew these gifts from him and from his posterity. Hence, in the present order of things, if we have concupiscence, ignorance, suffering and death, we owe it to the original prevarication of our first parent.

Now the troublesome question returns: If Mary was absolutely immune from original sin, why should she be deprived of the preternatural gifts? Why should she be subject to suffering and death? Does not the Immaculate Conception automatically remove from Mary the necessity of dying?

The representatives of the third theory insist that the Immaculate Conception did not confer on Our Lady any right to the preternatural gifts. And why not? Because the preternatural gifts were not intrinsically and essentially part of the original grace bestowed by God upon Adam. They were connected, to be sure, but only extrinsically, by a positive act of the divine will. Hence, Our Lady could very well receive the supernatural gifts (sanctifying grace and the right to heaven) without receiving likewise the preternatural gifts, among which is the gift of immortality.¹²

At this point the Roschini group interjects that, whether the nexus between the supernatural and preternatural gifts be intrinsic or extrinsic,

the fact remains that, in the present historical order, death is the effect of sin personally contracted. Since Mary was free from the cause, she should be free from the effect also.

To the above objection one may counter that death is not, strictly speaking, the "effect" of Adam's sin, but rather its penalty and punishment, which is not the same thing. In other words, sin does not, of itself and by its very nature, produce death. Death is connected with sin by an act of God's will and disposition. Nor will it help to say that, in the beginning, Adam's immortality was the effect of his original grace and that, since Mary was never deprived of that grace, she, too, should be immortal. The fact is that Adam's immortality was granted him in connection with, but not as an effect of, his original grace. If immortality were the necessary effect of grace, then surely Christ Himself would have been immortal, for He possessed grace in a most eminent degree. Yet we know that Christ not only died, but that His death was natural; it was violent, to be sure, as far as extrinsic circumstances were concerned, but it was natural nevertheless, as regards to intrinsic causes.¹³

Furthermore, even in the hypothesis that Adam's immortality had been a necessary effect of his original grace, it still would not follow that Our Lady's grace conferred a similar prerogative on her. The reason is that, as Pius XI once pointed out, the grace Our Lady received at the time of her conception, although unique and far surpassing the grace of all others in excellence, was not a grace of the order of creation (such as Adam received), "but a grace of Redemption which did not confer on her a true and proper immortality."¹⁴

Let us now turn to one of the strongest arguments adduced in favor of Mary's immortality, namely, the decree of the Second Council of Orange in 529. The canon in question reads: "If anyone asserts that Adam's sin was injurious only to Adam and not to his descendants, or if he declares that it was only the death of the body which is punishment for sin, and not the sin, the death of the soul, that passed from one man to all the human race, he will attribute an injustice to God and contradicts the words of the Apostle: 'Through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death,' and thus death has passed into all men because all have sinned."¹⁵ According to this (in the interpretation of the Roschini group) we would attribute an injustice to God if we were to

suppose that He could subject to the law of death a child of Adam who had not contracted the latter's sin. How, then, are we to explain the death of the Immaculate Virgin without implying an injustice on God's part?

A twofold solution may be offered in this connection. In the first place, the words of the canon *injustitiam Deo dabit* need not be translated as "will attribute an injustice to God." It is true that the verb *dare* has at times the meaning of attributing or imputing, but in that case it is used with two datives: in the canon mentioned it is used with an accusative and a dative. Hence it seems that the conciliar expression should be translated rather as "will do an injury to God" or "will offend God." If so, the meaning of the canon would be this: those who claim that Adam's children inherit from their first parent death only (without original sin), do an injury to God because they contradict the Apostle's teaching that "by one man sin entered into this world and by sin death."¹⁶ The canon, therefore, does not authorize us to conclude that the nexus between the preternatural gifts and freedom from original sin is such that God would be unjust were He to separate the two in a specific case and for reasons known to Himself.

Another possible solution to the difficulty may be stated as follows: Even in the hypothesis that the disputed words of the canon should be translated as "attributing an injustice to God" it does not follow that the right to immortality is necessarily connected with innocence. The reason is obvious. According to the Council we would attribute an injustice to God if we supposed that He inflicted death *as a punishment for personal sin* on an individual who had never contracted sin. The Council does not say that God would be unjust if He were to allow an innocent individual to die not in punishment for sin, but for some other reason extrinsic to sin. Besides, we must bear in mind that the Council is here dealing with the specific, concrete and universal law concerning the transmission of sin and death, as denied by the Pelagian heresy. It does not visualize possible exceptions, such as the unique case of Our Blessed Lady. The Council also states emphatically that the sin of Adam was inherited by the *entire* human race; and yet we know now that Our Lady was actually an exception to that general law.

This position seems to be further strengthened by a decision of the

Council of Trent relative to the effects of the sacrament of Baptism. According to the conciliar decree, this sacrament so thoroughly wipes away the stain of original sin *and all its punishments* from the soul of the baptized, that no trace of the previous curse remains and the soul is left utterly pure and immaculate in the sight of God.¹⁷ And yet daily experience shows that many children suffer and die, even while in possession of this baptismal grace. Are they the victims of an injustice? Not at all. They suffer and die, not in punishment for sin, but simply because they do not enjoy the preternatural gifts to which they had no right anyway.

The above, then, is a concise and objective presentation of the various opinions concerning Our Lady's death and immortality viewed only in their relation to her Immaculate Conception. As we pointed out before, the problem could have been approached and studied also from several other angles, but the scope of our paper was purposely restricted to this fundamental issue. To summarize now our personal views: As to the question of Mary's actual death, we do not see how it can be doubted, much less denied, considering that it has been believed and taught in the Catholic Church for so many centuries by the vast majority of theologians.¹⁸ However, since the Church herself allows free discussion on this point, we would abstain from censuring those who express a different opinion. As regards the so-called "right to immortality" on the part of Mary, we feel that none of the arguments so far advanced in its favor are decisive and apodictic, although they are much stronger than the arguments to prove that Our Lady did not actually die. At any rate, if it is ever conclusively established that the Immaculate Conception did confer on Our Lady a right to immortality, then it seems that the only plausible explanation of her actual death would be her mission as Co-redemptrix of the human race.¹⁹

Which of these conflicting views is more likely to triumph in the end? At this stage of the discussion it is difficult to forecast with certainty what future developments will bring. All things considered, the "traditional" view seems to be destined for final victory. But regardless of the ultimate outcome, we feel that this whole controversy has not been a vain and fruitless diatribe among professionals. It has had many rewarding points. For one thing, it has led Mariologists to a deeper and

more penetrating analysis of several other phases of the sacred sciences, heretofore somewhat neglected, and in this sense it has proved quite profitable to all concerned.

¹ D. Arnaldi, *Super definibilitate dogmatica Assumptionis corporeae B.V.M. Deiparae Immaculatae*, Augustae Taurinorum, 1884, p. 32; T. Gallus, S.J., *La Vergine Immortale*, Roma, 1949; G. M. Roschini, O.S.M., *La Madonna nella fede e la teologia*, vol. 3, Roma, 1953, pp. 255-295. On the writings and teaching of Arnaldi, cf. G. Ameri, O.F.M., *La dottrina di Domenico Arnaldi sull'Assunzione della B.V. Maria*, in *Marianum*, vol. 12, 1950, pp. 56-87; 141-169. For other authors sharing this view (at least partially) cf. Roschini, *op. cit.*, pp. 273-276.

² Card. A. H. Lépiciier, O.S.M. *Tractatus de Beatissima Virgine Maria Matre Dei*, Romae, 1926, pp. 356-361; J. M. Bover, S.J., *La Asunción de Maria*, Madrid, 1947, pp. 255 sqq.; R. V. O'Connell, S.J., *Mary's Assumption*, New York, 1930, pp. 16-17; C. Koser, O.F.M., *A definibilidade da Assunção de Nossa Senhora*, in *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira*, vol. 7, 1947, pp. 273 sqq.; B. Kloppenburg, O.F.M., *De relatione inter peccatum et mortem*, Romae, 1951, pp. 164-188. As to Father M. Jugie, A.A., who is sometimes listed among those who deny Mary's death, it must be stated that, according to him, this fact cannot be satisfactorily demonstrated; however, he enthusiastically favors the thesis of Mary's immortality *de jure*. Cf. his work *La mort et l'Assomption de la Sainte Vierge*, Citta del Vaticano, 1944, p. 539.

³ C. Balic, O.F.M. *De definibilitate Assumptionis B. V. Mariae in coelum*, in *Antonianum*, vol. 21, 1956 pp. 3-67; *De Assumptione B. V. Mariae quatenus in deposito fidei continetur*, *ibid.*, vol. 24, 1949, pp. 153-182; *La controversia acerca de la muerte de Maria Santísima desde la Edad Media hasta nuestros dias*, in *Estudios Marianos*, vol. 9, 1950, pp. 101-123; J.-F. Bonnefoy, O.F.M., *L'Assomption de la Très Sainte Vierge et sa prédestination*, in *Vers le dogme de l'Assomption*, Montréal, 1948, pp. 324-326; *La bulle dogmatique "Munificentissimus Deus,"* in *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, vol. 1, 1951, pp. 104-114; E. Sauras, O.P., *La Asunción de la Santísima Virgen*, Valencia, 1950, *passim*, especially pp. 154-170.

⁴ A. Mancini, S.B.D., *Sulla non-morte o morte di Maria*, in *Palestra del Clero*, vol. 32, 1943, fasc. 1, pp. 15-19.

⁵ Roma, Ed. F. Ferrari, 1953.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 276-278. Cf. also, by the same author, *The Assumption and the Immaculate Conception*, in *The Thomist*, vol. 14, 1950, pp. 59-71; *Il problema della morte di Maria SS. dopo la Costituzione Dogmatica "Munificentissimus Deus,"* in *Marianum*, vol. 13, 1951, pp. 148-163; *Il Problema della morte di Maria SS. Risposta alle contesta-*

zioni del P. Sauras, in *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, vol. 3, 1953, pp. 25-53.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 234-235.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 259.

⁹ Cf. Bover, *op. cit.*, p. 69; O'Connell, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-21; H. Rondet, S.J., *La définibilité de l'Assomption*, in *Bulletin de la Société Française d'Etudes Mariales*, Paris, 1948, p. 95, footnote 67; L. Janssens, O.S.B., *Summa Theologica*, vol. 5, De Deo-Homine, Friburgi, 1902, p. 864.

¹⁰ Cf. C. Boyer, S.J., *Raisons de la mort de la Très-Sainte Vierge* in *Congrès Marial du Puy-en-Velay: L'Assomption de la Très-Sainte Vierge*, Paris, 1950, pp. 126-127; E. Caggiano, O.F.M., *L'Assunzione della B. Vergine nei dommi mariani*, in *Atti del Congresso Nazionale Mariano dei Frati Minori d'Italia*, Roma, 1948, pp. 630-640.

¹¹ Cf. L. Carli, *Dopo la proclamazione del dogma dell'Assunta. La questione della morte di Maria SS.*, in *Palestra del Clero*, vol. 30, 1951, fasc. 8, p. 351.

¹² Actually, Our Blessed Lady was endowed with immunity from concupiscence and, in a manner consonant with the condition, immunity from ignorance. But these privileges were conferred on her as most fitting to her exalted dignity as the Mother of God, not because she had a right to the preternatural gifts. Cf. A. Kippes, O.M.I., *The Immaculate Conception and the Preternatural Gifts*, in *Marian Studies*, vol. 5, 1954, pp. 186-199.

¹³ Cf. Mancini, *art. cit.*, p. 17.

¹⁴ Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, Aug. 16-17, 1933.

¹⁵ *D. B.*, 175.

¹⁶ Cf. on this point C. Balic, *A propósito de la reciente controversia sobre la definibilidad de la Asunción de la Bienaventurada Virgen*, in *Actas del Congreso Asuncionista Franciscano de America Latina*, Buenos Aires, 1950, pp. 363-374.

¹⁷ *D. B.*, 807. Pope Eugene had already taught the same thing in the decree for the Armenians in 1439; cf. *D. B.*, 696.

¹⁸ Cf. Balic, in *Estudios Marianos*, vol. 9, 1950, pp. 122-123.

¹⁹ Cf. Kloppenburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-188.

MOTHER OF THE LOST CHILD

by

CARYLL HOUSELANDER

ALTHOUGH neither of her parents was a Catholic at the time, Caryll Houselander was baptized a Catholic when she was five years old. Her schooling, which she treats very lightly in her autobiography, *A Rocking Horse Catholic*, was had in convent schools of England.

Born in 1901, Miss Houselander was almost forty before she began to write books for adults, but each of these works is permeated with a profound understanding of grace and the Mystical Body. She wrote perhaps her best known book, *The Reed of God*, because "a great many people still think of Our Lady as someone who would never do anything we do," and she wished to point out the falsity of such thinking.

Her death in 1954 cut short the work of a major spiritual writer.

MOTHER OF THE LOST CHILD

by

CARYLL HOUSELANDER

I WAS told the story of an old Bavarian peasant woman. When she was younger she lost her only son, and only child. He was killed in the last war. Her neighbors, remembering that she had almost idolized the child, thought that she would be inconsolable, and they were astonished when she adopted another son. They were still more astonished because he was a little Negro.

Her own son had been very fair, with straight, blonde hair and light blue eyes; the child she now had, had a black, velvety face like a dark pansy, damson eyes, and curly hair.

She gave him everything that her son had owned. There was no doubt of her love for him. There could be none for those who saw her face, weather-beaten and lined, marked and sealed with sorrow, and yet shining with quiet happiness.

One day a neighbor said to her:

"I would never have thought that you would put another boy in your son's place."

"I have not," she answered, simply: "There is only one boy, Jesus Christ."

That woman knew blessedness which would not be possible to human nature had not Our Lady, whom she resembled so vividly, made it possible.

After the war there will be many thousands of women who will need to live as Our Lady did after the crucifixion.

A generation of mothers will need to know, with the heart, that "there is only one boy, Jesus Christ."

The world's future will depend upon this, upon everyone's realizing

that the survival of all that is worth the cost of a man's blood depends upon how we foster the Christ-life in the souls of the children, and not only in the children, but in all the reborn of any age.

And not only the world's future, but our going to heaven, will depend on it.

All we know about Our Lady's life after the Crucifixion, is that the disciple John took her to live with him.

"From that hour that disciple took her into his own home."

There, in secrecy again, she lived what is certainly our life of preparation for heaven; in secrecy, but known to all those around her, as every Christian is.

In the first Advent, she had prepared to look upon the face of her Son by working for Joseph: cooking, cleaning, weaving, mending for him, and undoubtedly being a companion to him in thought, too.

Now she had come to another Advent, a preparation for seeing her Son's face in heaven, and it was to be lived out in exactly the same way.

We might have thought that even if she had not been allowed to go away to some place of solitude, to prepare for the birth of God by prayer and retirement, at least she might do so now, for now she was beginning to grow old. She had seen her Son through His life and death; she had closed His eyes and put Him into the tomb; and she must wait, to see those eyes opening again, until she got to heaven.

Now, at all events, she might have gone away, and shutting out the distractions of the world, folded her being upon the thought of God and waited His summons, rapt in contemplation.

But the opposite was her way.

Perhaps Our Lord took so young an apostle as John into His motley little company in order that he should be still a boy when he took Our Lady home. Perhaps, too, His very special love for John may have had something to do with the future, in which Christ foresaw John giving His mother no time to grieve.

She had been crucified we know; and her longing for Christ is beyond our knowing; but faith and a boy in the house could make life very full. It is moving to think of her once more baking the kind of cakes she knew boys like; once more patching and darning, and sewing buckles on sandals; once more talking of the things that interested the boy and

being a companion to his thought. And how fitting it was that the companion of John's thought should be Our Lady. For John's was the mind of crystal in which all the fires of love reflected, and Mary's was the mind of the girl who sang the Magnificat.

At length she died.

For us, death will be another First Communion—we simply cannot imagine what it was for the Bride of the Spirit.

We know that her body was taken to heaven, for God would not let corruption touch the flesh from which Christ's body was made.

But these things dazzle us and leave us stammering when we would like to sing.

No wonder that the most astonishing sermons are preached about Our Lady's Assumption.

They sometimes puzzle converts when they first hear them, for they seems to be descriptions by eyewitnesses, and it is difficult to know how literally they are to be taken.

To the Catholic from the cradle they are not puzzling. He went to Church before he could walk, and he lives with too little wonder in the midst of miracles. He knows that the descriptions the preacher makes are no more and no less than the "Holy Cards" which he used to eat during Benediction, when he was that solemn, unshakable creature, a Catholic baby.

They are better than the Holy Cards though, for each one of these sermons comes from a heart burning with a child's faith and truth that cannot be told.

They are in the great picture-book of the Church, illuminated pages, crudely drawn by a child, but drawn by a child whose mother has given him sanguine, vermilion, azure, and gold.

They say that when her time came to die, Our Lady was borne up to heaven in the hands of angels, borne through a blue sky that was warm with the noonday heat and yet was pale beside the blueness of her mantle.

The legions of saints waited her coming, glorious in garments scarlet and white, with burning haloes; and before them all came Gabriel, his mantle dazzling silver in the sunlight. Bowing low, he gave her a lily for a sceptre.

She passed the multitude of the angels and saints and came at last to a place of solitude; and here her Son came to her; and He was a king in a robe of rose, and his wounds were jewels that shone; and He crowned her with a great crown set with seven brilliant stars for her life's seven sorrows.

What does this all really mean?

Because we cannot conceive of heaven we have, in our own minds, almost whittled it away to nothingness. Because it is not a place as we understand place, we unconsciously think of it as nowhere. In our dread of forming a materialist conception of it, we have conceived of it as nothing.

We do not know where or what or how heaven is, but this we know, and it is very nearly all that we know about heaven.

In heaven Our Lady is with God.

Our Lady's body is there, and the Body of Christ is there: and Our Lady's soul and the soul of Christ and His divinity.

We can realize this only in so far as we realize it through its effect upon the world.

There, before God, is humanity, our humanity; but innocent humanity in all its primal loveliness; humanity with which the Spirit of God is in love.

And she is ours!

Therefore, it is always Advent, always spring: the life and birth and death and resurrection of Christ always goes on upon earth, an unending circle of light.

Because even now, and always, the *fiat* is uttered, and the Love of the Spirit of Life is consummated in the Child Bride; the earth is continually made new; we are continually born again.

This is what really matters most of all to everyone: the power to be made new.

Not simply beginning again, dragging along with the old scars, the old crippling wounds, the old weakness dragging at the will; limping with the weariness of yesterday, sore with the heartsickness of the last defeat, bitter with the still smarting grievance against one another.

Not that, but real newness, being born again.

A new will, new heart, new vision, new love—indeed, new life.

Even in natural things, it is newness that gives us most delight: day-break, morning in spring. These seem to us like promises from heaven, promises of our own renewal.

"I will give you the morning star."

To be born again: that is exactly what Christ has promised to us; not only once, but just as often as our inner life grows old and jaded and dies.

But newness, flowering spring, shadowless morning, are not born of what is decaying, corrupt and fetid.

They are born only of virginity, virginity which is newness, virginity complete as fire and water.

The only virginity like that is the virginity of Our Lady; it is through this virginity that the earth is made new, that the Holy Spirit is wed to humanity.

Through Mary of Nazareth Christ is born again and again in the individual heart.

"Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus," the little children say. And they do not understand what they say. But as they grow older, with the angel's prayer in their hearts, they begin to understand that this "fruit" is the Life of Christ born again in the world—always, everywhere.

Our Lady is in heaven.

On earth the breath of the spirit is stirring the young green corn. The song of the shepherd is heard in lambing time.

In heaven the music of the Incarnation is uttered eternally in its first simplicity.

The Mother has found the lost Child.

THE ASSUMPTION AND THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
by
GERARD M. CORR, O.S.M.

FATHER CORR was born in 1910 at Clayton, Lancashire, joined the Servites in 1928, and was ordained in 1935. He is presently teaching at St. Mary's Priory, London.

Besides contributing to many periodicals, he has written two books: *The Seven Sorrows of Mary*, a study of the devotion to the Sorrowful Mother, and *Servites in London*, an account of the coming of the Order of Servants of Mary to England.



THE ASSUMPTION AND THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

by

GERARD M. CORR, O.S.M.

IF THE RETURN of the English to the true Faith is to be a consequence of the return of England to Mary, the definition of the doctrine of the Assumption is a definite step in the right direction.

It has probably made more Anglicans think about Our Lady and her place in the scheme of Redemption than anything since Lourdes. Even Fatima has not had such an effect. No Anglican Archbishops or Bishops, as far as I know, have taken the trouble to make solemn pronouncements about Fatima. Both Canterbury and York have done so about the Assumption. Both have objected to the dogma, but that is not the point. They have talked about it. They have also provoked some of their people not only to think about it but to contradict them.

One quite small but very significant instance of this will suffice. In a letter to the *Catholic Herald* an Anglican wrote:

Sir,

May I state through the medium of your paper that as a member of the Church of England I do not agree with the Archbishops of Canterbury and York's rejection of the Bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven. The Pope is to be praised and not censured for his reverence of Our Lady.

(W. H. Woodham, St. Seven, 34, Glebe Rd.
Stanmore, Middx.)

In other words, the definition has focused the minds of Anglicans on the connection between the true Church and the love and reverence which we owe to Our Lady; and that is all to the good.

But what is, or shall be, the position for a devout Anglican who loves and honors Our Blessed Lady, now that the Assumption is a dogma?

It is really very simple. A good Anglican can sincerely accept the whole doctrine as set out in the Bull *Munificentissimus Deus*. In fact I am sure many devout Anglicans have done so. But can they do it without a qualm? The answer would seem to be, in many cases, that they can. That the Bishops reject a doctrine which they accept with their whole hearts does not trouble them unduly. They may think (and some of them do)¹ that the hierarchy is in great need of reform in these matters, but that of itself does not lead them to reflect that they are being led astray. To question the divine mission of their leaders would be a very grave conclusion and we must not expect many Anglican laymen to reach it through differences on the doctrine of the Assumption.

In the Church of England there are three main divisions in the matter of doctrine.

First, and perhaps most noticeable, are the High Anglicans, who are prepared to accept, and often do accept, but as individuals, the whole of the Church's teaching on faith and morals. They are a small minority, and they are aware of the fact. Among them there are various Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods, living lives of self-abnegation and severe asceticism which would put to shame some of our own religious. The late Bishop Kirk of Oxford and the present Bishop Wand of London may perhaps be named as sympathizers with this type of Anglicanism. But there are many gradations to be found in different parts of the country, and even from parish to parish. Sometimes in the same parish we find the Vicar and his assistants holding very different views on the degree of "Romanizing" that is admissible. The few Bishops who are definitely "High" are no doubt a great example and support to the many clergymen who accept practically the whole of the Church's teaching. It is probable that at the present time the vast majority of the clergy of the Church of England have in some degree adopted doctrines and customs which their predecessors of fifty years ago would have stigmatized as "Roman."

This tendency to Rome has a corporate expression in two societies formed for the purpose of facilitating reunion with the "Mother Church of Rome." They differ in one important point, one of them working for

unconditional submission (but corporate, not individual—they wish to influence the Church of England from the inside, so as to bring about a general demand for reunion), the other being inclined to ask for a compromise, to make terms. It is difficult to say what effect these organized efforts are having in the Church of England as a whole, but there must be about a thousand of the clergy either in these societies or greatly influenced by them. From the point of view of our present subject—the attitude of Anglicans to the Assumption dogma—it is clear that a vast number of sincere Anglicans will have found no difficulty in approving of it, and will secretly wish that their own hierarchy had taken a different line. The fact that the Catholic Church has considered the matter so important as to merit the proclamation of a dogma will certainly compel their attention, even more than heretofore; they will think more purposefully about this great truth. To that extent they will be brought nearer to the Church.

It should be borne in mind that the High Anglicans have a strong case, historically and doctrinally among their own people, for their devotion to Our Blessed Lady and their acceptance of the Assumption. There has always been a section of the English Church in which a good deal of Catholic thought and devotion to Mary has been retained. The Oxford Movement, of course, included a strong reaction in the Church of England against the progressive impoverishment, the slow emptying out of Catholic thought, which threatened to make England not only un-Catholic but un-Christian. John Henry Newman and his associates could see that the alternative to Rome was dechristianization. But they did not need to make this their main argument. They could, and they did, point out that the Roman doctrines which they believed had never been quite lost in the Church of England. That is still the attitude of many Anglicans. The difference is that a hundred years ago the claim could be made that *England* had never lost these things: from a religious point of view England practically was the Church of England. It is not so today. The Church of England, though enjoying the strongest official support, entrenched in its quasi-political position, and loosely holding many millions of Englishmen in loyalty to it, no longer has the courage to identify itself with the people of England. When Anglicans turn to their by-gone theologians for justification of "Romanizing" they are

turning to an England that was, and is not. The English, as a people *have* lost their links with Rome. We priests, who receive converts (non-Anglicans), and instruct them in the Faith, have to begin at the beginning, not merely to restore a few links in a chain which is otherwise sound.

The dogma of the Assumption must have made many of the Anglican clergy review the position seriously. It brings the realities of dogma and devotion closer together, and the question must arise: Are they identified? It is, in fact, devotion to Our Lady that forms the real link between pre-Reformation Catholic thought and present-day Anglican thought. Insofar as an Anglican is devout to Our Lady he is harking back to Catholic England. The Anglican who really loves Our Lady must feel very uncertain and unhappy in face of the question: Has God revealed that Mary was taken up body and soul into heaven?

A typical statement of the High Anglican position may be found in a very popular book entitled *The Blessed Virgin and All the Company of Heaven* by Archdeacon Wirgman.² A few quotations from this will, I trust, illustrate what I have been saying.

The Introduction begins:

The English Church is in practical accord with the Primitive Church upon the veneration due to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints.

Note the words "Primitive Church" which seem to leave a large loophole for those who wish to differ from the Church of the present time. But the author has no intention of differing from Rome on the matter of the Assumption.

If we believe her (Mary's) own words, "for he that is Mighty hath magnified me,"—if we further believe in her sinless purity, which alone raised her far above the level of the Saints who have already been raised with their bodies, it is reasonable to believe that her body is specially honoured by being in heaven now, as we believe theirs to be. It is not too much to say that it would be violence to the whole tenor of Chris-

tian teaching and the reverent instincts of Catholic thought to believe anything else.³

(Incidentally, the authority he quotes here is Cardinal Lépiciér, *De Beatissima Virgine*).

There would seem to be no room for doubt that Archdeacon Wirgman considered it necessary to believe in the Assumption (the alternative being to "do violence to the whole tenor of Catholic thought"). And it would seem to follow that a great many Anglican clergy believe it today, for the book is highly esteemed and commands wide assent, among them. But before we jump to conclusions, however reasonable, we must see the conclusion of Wirgman himself. He says:

Therefore we may believe that her body has also been raised from the grave.⁴

We *may* believe. That is all.

It would be foolish and useless to infer that the many Anglicans who are drawing the same conclusion today are illogical and irrational. In matters of reasoning Anglicans have their share, and more than their share, of logic. That "*may* believe" is not an attempt to draw a conclusion from premises: it is a deliberate understatement due to an invincible repugnance to the words "must believe." Anyone familiar with Anglican writings will realize that the words "*must* believe" could not have been used: they give a shock to the system: they are assertive, arrogant, almost rude. You may persuade people to believe, but whatever happens you must never say that they must believe. That is dogmatism, the one sin which neither side of a controversy must ever commit.

And this brings us to the crux of the matter, the point from which the whole Anglican position falls into perspective and makes sense; and incidentally it introduces us to the second section of the English Church, comprising the vast majority of its adherents: it is the idea that Englishmen "will not be dictated to" in matters of religion.

Both clergy and laity of the Church of England are, as a body, actively antipathetic to the Church of Rome under that aspect which we call "authoritative teaching" and they call "dogmatizing." Whatever else they differ on (and they do differ considerably) they are agreed in this,

that religion is a matter for the individual conscience and no one, no society, on earth has power to impose a belief on anyone.⁵

In this question of the dogma of the Assumption, Dr. Garbett, Archbishop of York, truly spoke for the rest when he said (as reported in the *Daily Telegraph*) that "There was nothing to justify the claim that even the holiest and wisest of men was infallible in his decisions as to the faith of the church, and had been given the right to make new dogmas which had no warrant in Scripture."

It is always, always the same story: "No man is infallible." This unfortunate word "infallible" is responsible for more misunderstanding in this connection, than any other word in the language.

Perhaps that will seem a strong statement: I must make some attempt to justify it. "Infallible" is an immediate derivative from *infallibilis*. But it does not mean "*infallibilis*" when applied to persons. The Latin word is carefully defined, by theologians, and is of course entirely unobjectionable to both Latin speakers and to people who speak a Latin language. The English word, when applied to things (scientific tests, for instance) is quite an inoffensive creature with no unpleasant connections, but when applied to persons it is nearly always next door to an insult. It means "possessing, or pretending to possess, omniscience, or a total incapacity for making a mistake." If there is one thing which the average Englishman takes for granted, it is that nobody on earth is quite like that.

Thus, from the careless use of a Latin derivative, in itself harmless but in current usage incongruous and dangerous, we constantly place an obstacle in our own path in this work of converting Anglicans to the Faith. (And to make matters worse when they make silly statements like that of Dr. Garbett, we accuse them of not knowing the meaning of words—as if we, and not they, were the arbiters of current English usage).

I trust I have made it clear, or at least shown it to be arguable, that the English reaction to the dogma has been that of a mood, not of intellectual disagreement. (I put aside the theological arguments used against the Assumption on this occasion because I think they were used not to *disprove* it, but merely to show that it cannot be made a *dogma*: there is apparently no reason why an Anglican should not believe in the Assumption privately).

At present the mood of the Moderates (which is the proper title of the Anglicans we are now considering) may be expressed roughly as follows: In all matters of doctrine not connected immediately with morals, with decent living, one should allow great latitude to individuals: generally speaking, our difference with Rome and High Church, on the one hand, and the Low Church on the other, is that Rome says you *must* believe them. Low Church says you *mustn't*, and we say you *may*. What could be fairer than that?

In November of 1949 there was a most interesting correspondence in the columns of *The Times*, on the subject "Catholics Today." Its main threads, which kept it together, were the similarities and differences between Rome and the Church of England, and the prospects of reunion. The whole thing began with an article from a Special Correspondent which admirably sums up the normal attitude of Anglicans:

The Mother Church of Western Christendom (i.e. Rome) with its ever timely insistence on the principle of divine authority and on the accessibility of objective truth, has still much to give to modern society, but a more engaging method of procedure than one by decree and reproachful admonition would be generally welcomed. . . . The victory of persuasion over force is that by which Christianity was first established; it is also that whereby it will be maintained.

Personally I believe that this attitude is common to all sincere Anglicans: and I think that the reason is a simple one: English Catholics have consistently presented Roman documents to the English public in timid literal translations. We have given to all our opponents a very plausible reason for their argument that Rome "proceeds by decree and reproachful admonition."

This, to my mind, is nowhere better brought out than on the occasion of the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption. The reactions against it have been a mixture of protests against "dogmatizing" and repeated assertions that "it is not in Scripture." It is useless, and unwise, to remind them that, as a Church, they themselves are very dogmatic

about the fundamental criterion of Christian truth, or that they do not really believe in the divine inspiration of Scripture. They do not argue "as a Church" but as individuals, which gives them unlimited scope for maneuver. A typical retort would be: "Let us grant, for the sake of argument, that the Assumption dogma is true: even so, it is unwise and undiplomatic to make a brusque assertion and pronouncement that all who do not accept it will incur the wrath of God. You Romans are widening the breach between Canterbury and yourselves for mere love of dogmatizing." (This is the line taken by the curious book *The Assumption of Our Lady and Catholic Theology*,⁶ which professed to be written "from a Roman Catholic point of view." We should remember that Anglicans really think they understand the "Roman Catholic point of view," just as much as we really think we understand theirs).

Msgr. Ronald Knox was asked to translate the Bull *Munificentissimus Deus* for the *Tablet* (Dec. 23, 1950). He gave a translation which, for sheer Englishness, defies competition, even among Anglicans.⁷ To crown the work he had the inspiration of putting the last few lines between brackets, which makes them (what they are) the necessary formal reminder that the Pope is speaking *ex cathedra*. Msgr. Knox is the son of an Anglican Bishop. He knows the Anglican mind perhaps better than anyone living. His approach to this task of putting the Assumption dogma before the English people seems to me the ideal way of meeting the objections that have been raised and reaping the fruit of this great occasion of the exaltation of Mary. Too often and for too long, we have presented Roman documents in an English dress which did not recommend itself to our non-Catholic friends. We need a presentation of Roman procedure which will link it with the common vocabulary for such things in the English mind.

The third section of the Church of England, the Low Church, is satisfyingly definite on the matter of the Assumption. There are no hairpin bends in their line of thought. For them the dogma is false and the definition is futile. "Rome hath erred" is a part of their faith. In defining the Assumption Rome is merely adding insult to injury. Yet the occasion has certainly done good. It has undoubtedly made many of them examine once more the iniquities of Rome, and that is all to the good: they are fundamentally fairminded and if they would only take

more interest in Rome, instead of rejecting it off-hand with all its works and pomps, they would inevitably come nearer to us and begin to shake off the prejudice of centuries. Meanwhile they are the first to quote anything which looks like "procedure by decree and reproachful admonition" as a proof that Rome is tyrannical, arrogant and intransigent.

Summing up, the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption will be a real factor in the work of bringing the English people back to Mary and to the Faith: the unfortunate manifestations which it has occasioned, the probable retarding of progress in some direction, the opportunity it has given for some opponents of the Church to strengthen their arguments, all these are greatly outweighed by the fact that the Church of England, as a whole, has been stimulated into thinking directly about Our Blessed Lady. Our Holy Mother will know how to make the most of this occasion.⁸

¹ An Anglican clergyman wrote to me recently: "What we need is a Mission to the hierarchy..."

² *The Blessed Virgin and all the Company of Heaven*, by A. Theodore Wirgman. London, Cope and Fenwick, 1913. This is a mine of information and is still widely used by Anglicans.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁵ Cf. *Essays Catholic and Critical*, S.P.C.K., 1926, p. 93: "No claim has ever been made with more emphasis by religious authority than the modern Roman claim that the Bishop of Rome, under certain narrowly defined conditions, is possessed *ex officio* of a supernatural infallibility. The writers of this volume are united in the conviction that the claims made in this respect for the Papacy are in point of fact untrue." (My italics). The writers are: E. O. James, A. E. Taylor, A. E. J. Rawlinson, Wilfred L. Knox, L. S. Thornton, Sir E. Hoskyns, J. K. Mozley, E. J. Bicknell, K. E. Kirk, E. Gordon Selwyn, E. Milner-White, A. Hamilton Thompson, N. P. Williams, Will Spens.

⁶ *The Assumption of Our Lady and Catholic Theology*, by Victor Bennett and Raymond Winch. London, S.P.C.K., 1950. 120 pp. This professes to be "from the Roman Catholic point of view." It has no imprimatur. A most useful book for understanding the infinite capacity for making distinctions of the Anglican mind.

⁷ Msgr. Knox's translation of the encyclical is included in the present anthology, p. 149-166.

⁸ This article is based principally on personal information from, and

discussion with, Anglicans and ex-Anglicans: Rev. Ernest C. Morgan, formerly for many years an Anglican vicar; Rev. Jerome St. Claire, an Anglican clergyman in London; the late F. Geoffrey Rendall of the British Museum; V. Rev. Msgr. H. K. Pierce, of Rome, who in his Anglican days was one of the pillars of the reunion movement; Fr. Conrad Pepler, O.P., editor of *Life of the Spirit*; and a friend who was formerly an Anglican lay-brother and a licensed preacher.

Other pertinent documents on the subject of this article:

Catholicism Today. A collection of letters to the editor reprinted from *The London Times*, beginning Oct. 31, 1949, and continuing until Nov. 29, 1949. A galaxy of Catholic apologists took part in the discussion: Bishop Beck, A.C.F. Beales, Abbot Butler, Emile Cammaerts, Dom Columba Cary-Elwes, Fr. Crehan, S.J., Michael de la Bedoyère, T. S. Gregory, Arnold Lunn, Robert Sencourt, Sir Henry Slessor, Wingfield Digby, S.J. They were, of course, greatly outnumbered by others. This booklet is a revelation of English non-Catholic ways of thinking on the subject of reunion with Rome.

The Mother of God, a symposium edited by E. L. Mascall. London, Dacre Press, 1949. 80 pp. Contains some beautiful and devout writing and sheds much light on Anglican Mariology. Dr. Mascall's article is particularly good.

Did Mary Rise from the Dead? by Ivor Thomas. London, S.P.C.K., 1951.

Authority in Doctrine, presidential address of the Archbishop of York, Oct. 12, 1950.

The Catholic Religion: a manual of instruction for members of the Anglican Church, by Rev. Vernon Staley. London, Mowbray, 1908. Useful for the "primitive Christianity" argument.

What Do We Believe? by John Lawson. London, S.P.C.K., 1951. "A catechism of 144 straight questions and plain answers concerning the Churches."

THE ASSUMPTION IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

by

MARIE-DOMINIQUE PHILIPPE, O.P.

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THE ASSUMPTION IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

by

MARIE-DOMINIQUE PHILIPPE, O.P.

IN THE MYSTERY of the Assumption, as presented by the tradition of the Church to our faith and filial devotion, different aspects may be distinguished: the dormition of Mary, the glorification of her soul, her resurrection and the ascent into heaven of her body. We cannot, in these few pages, exhaust the richness of each one of these aspects. We shall, therefore, restrict ourselves above all to the last of these, that of the Assumption of the glorious body of Mary. Presupposing the various theological studies which expound the fittingness of this mystery, we shall endeavor to develop its essential relations to our life as Christians and sons of God. It is, therefore, from the point of view of spiritual theology that we wish to study this mystery here.

THE ASSUMPTION AS A SIGN OF GOD'S LOVE FOR MARY

By the resurrection and glorification of the body of Christ, God shows the incomparable love which He bears towards His only-begotten Son. The Father could not permit the body of the divine Crucified, His beloved Son in Whom He is well pleased, to know corruption. By the bloody death of the cross, Christ bore witness before the eyes of the entire world that divine Love is stronger than death and that His only "food" was to accomplish fully the will of the Father. In so doing, He gave glory to the Name of His Father and proclaimed His sovereign majesty. By the resurrection of the body of Christ, the Father glorified His Son "with the glory which He had" with Him "before the world was" (John 17:5). This resurrection manifests to all eyes the eternal triumph

of the love of the Father for Him who was obedient unto death, and who completed the work which the Father had given Him.

In the same way, the mystery of the Assumption reveals to us all the very special love of Jesus for His beloved Mother, in whom He is well pleased, for whom He poured out all His blood. First of all Our Lord communicated to the soul of His Mother the fulness of His love by permitting her, once the trial upon earth was over, to enjoy the fulness of the beatific vision. She who had been blessed in her faith at the time of the Annunciation, who had been faithful and patient at the moment of the great trial upon Calvary, who had consented to remain on earth with St. John to watch over the infant Church, deserved to live at last by the mystery of the Triune God, "face to face," in full light and in an eternal ecstasy of love. By her beatific vision, Mary lives the very life of God, the very life of her Son. Like Him, she looks upon the Father and loves Him; like Him she lives by His gaze and His love; in the Word and the Holy Spirit, she lives by the Father. To be sure, Mary remains as always the handmaid of her God, but a handmaid who knows all the intimacy of a well-beloved child, who is introduced into the paternal household to rejoice there as a legitimate heir. But the love of Jesus for His Mother aimed at more than that. All that He could give her, He would give her. Since He was able to add the glorification and resurrection of Mary's body to the beatification of her soul, Jesus, as the conjoined instrument of the power of God, did it. The glorious heart of Jesus, burning Furnace of Charity, wished that the whole humanity of her whom He loved should participate immediately, and in all possible fulness in the splendor and the beauty of His own glorious humanity.

It was truly upon the model of the glorious body of Christ that the body of Mary rose again. What St. Paul tells us of all the members of Christ is obviously and especially true of her who had been chosen in so privileged a manner. "Christ is now risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep; for by a man came death and by a man the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:20). "He will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of His glory" (Phil. 3:21). The glorious humanity of Christ is the instrumental and exemplary cause of the resurrection of the humanity of His Mother. What Mary had given Him, at the time of the forming of His earthly body, Jesus glorified

returns to her a hundred-fold. The body of Mary, like that of all mothers, had served as a natural and living model for the formation of the body of the infant Jesus. Following the forceful expression of St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, the Holy Spirit had made of her body "the mould of God." The Child Jesus resembled His Mother; His feelings, His physiognomy, His characteristics were a continuation of those of His Mother. Jesus, then, by the power of God, raised up her body according to the divine and living model of His glorious body. The glorified body of Mary echoes that of her Son, by continuing and emphasizing all its splendors. The glorious body of Mary is entirely related to that of her Son. Such is the marvelous way in which God fructifies that which one gives Him: Mary accepts the most humble service of maternity by giving Him her flesh and blood; Jesus gives her all the magnificence of His glory. He exalts the humility of the handmaid of God.

The love of Jesus for Mary is such that He would bear no delay. As soon as she finished her long earthly pilgrimage, as soon as she attained to that plenitude of grace and love which the Wisdom of God had fixed for her, the love of the Heart of Jesus wished her to be entirely His. In order that she, like Himself, might be the glory of the Father, He gives Himself entirely to her, that she might live fully through Him in all the glory of God. She, who was the ever loving, compassionate companion in the sorrowful mysteries, is to remain for eternity as the loving companion in glory.

Thanks to the mystery of the Assumption, the strong bonds of love which united the heart of Jesus to that of Mary during their earthly life unite them now in heaven in a completely perfect way. In fact, there now flourishes between the glorified Christ and His glorified Mother the mystery of a "common life," both intimate and loving, for which the joyful common life of Nazareth was but a preparation. At Nazareth all the human love of the Mother for her Son and of the Son for His Mother was entirely absorbed into the plenitude of their charity. That common life was indeed a truly family life, but entirely ordained to "the Father's business," entirely subject to His loving will, where the divine love encountered no obstacle and could progressively take possession of the heart of Mary. But this reign of the divine love in the hearts of Jesus and Mary remained veiled and hidden to the eyes of men; all

was reserved to God. This was truly the hidden life of Jesus and Mary. In heaven, the charity of Mary's heart has attained its full stature and the reciprocal divine love which perpetually unites the hearts of Jesus and Mary radiates brilliantly throughout their glorious humanity. Not only is all human love absorbed by the divine love but this divine love expresses it with splendor, making of their humanity a "burning bush," burning without being consumed. Within, this glorified love divinely harmonizes and unites their hearts, permitting them to interpenetrate each other without being fused into one. The heart of Mary receives all the love of the heart of Jesus, but at the same time she returns to Him all the love which she has received from Him. Our poor mortal words are incapable of expressing these mysteries of glory, when the risen body is, so to speak, set on fire by the divine love, being entirely devoted to its service, a "living ostensorium" of its dazzling light.

The mystery of the Assumption, in a word, shows us the quality or, one might even say, the jealousy of the divine love for Mary, by bringing to full flower all the effects of the divine love contained in germ in the privilege of the Immaculate Conception and the Divine Maternity. For us, death is a penalty due to sin, and the corruption which follows as a natural consequence is part of that penalty. By reason of her privilege of exemption from original sin, Mary knows death only out of pure love, for her Son and for us. If she accepts death, it is out of an entirely free obedience, in order to live all He has lived, and all that we live, including death. But as for corruption, the body of Christ was not to undergo it. If we must undergo it, it is as a necessary consequence of a fact which may be meritorious in its cause but not in itself. That is why God in His wisdom asks Mary to accept death with all its consequences in order that, following Jesus and like Him, she may use death to intensify her love of God and increase her merit, but He prevents death from exercising upon the most pure body of Mary the ravages of corruption, for these would have in no wise increased her love and her merit.

This incorruptibility which Jesus possesses by right, in virtue of the mystery of the hypostatic union, Mary receives as the normal consequence of her privilege of the Immaculate Conception. It is truly by the merits of Christ crucified and because of her love that she is found united to Him unto death and after death in this incorruptibility. This latter is

truly for us a manifest sign of the unique love which He bears her. In the midst of the human race, she rises like an incorruptible lily, of striking purity, showing us the power and the efficaciousness of the divine love, capable of making use of death to exalt and glorify body and soul, without, nevertheless being subjected to its tyrannical yoke, corruption.

By reason of the close and profound ties which the Divine Maternity had brought about between Mary and her Son, this Divine Maternity, both physical and miraculous, demanded both a physical and miraculous recompense, to be brought about in the body of Mary. Mary, at the Annunciation, by her *fiat* had accepted as the "handmaid of God" that "the power of the Most High should overshadow her." In her mystery of the Assumption, the power of the Most High overshadows her eternally in order to exalt her as the beloved Mother of the glorified Christ, associated in His sovereign and divine rule.

This divine and virginal maternity which had brought no affront to the integrity of the body of Mary, had intimately marked her flesh with a divine seal: everything in her was separated from the world and from its deceiving desires. It was normal that her death itself, wholly offered and consecrated to God by obedience and love, should bear no affront to the integrity and purity of her flesh, and should offer to physical laws no occasion to regain over her body their natural rights. In effect, by the corruption of the flesh, the physical universe exercises its most basic rights over the cadaver of man. The latter must then necessarily become an integral part of the cosmos and concur anonymously in its equilibrium and natural fecundity which is always in movement. This reintegration of the cadaver of man into the cosmos is part of the penalty due to sin. The Church recalls to us on Ash Wednesday, with her maternal realism: "Remember that thou art dust and to dust thou shalt return." For our human psychology, this return of our body to dust is something very humiliating, and can even, at certain moments, nauseate us, giving us that profound disgust which suspends every flight of love and desire. The most extraordinary advances of science will never be able to suppress or absorb this fatal issue of our terrestrial life. It is thus that we can understand that every human philosophy which does not accept the immortality of the soul, if it has any sense of the absolute, will make

of this "nausea" which it cannot dominate, the very core of its philosophy.

The body of Mary, living tabernacle of God, promised land, enclosed garden, was not to know this degradation. Like the "Ark of the Covenant," it was to remain intact, for God and the human race, above all the torrents of corruption, which would be unable to touch it. The mystery of the Assumption bears witness to us, therefore, of this marvelous jealousy of the divine love, which not only preserves the soul of Mary intact and immaculate, but does not permit that her virginal body, so totally and so intimately consecrated to God, should be subject to any other laws. Her body is to remain the immediate and exclusive property of her God.

THE ASSUMPTION AS A SIGN OF GOD'S LOVE FOR THE HUMAN RACE

Mary is the new Eve, the true "Mother of the Living." By consenting, at the Annunciation, to become the Mother of Jesus, the "Son of the Most-High," He who comes to save us, She consents at the same time to become the Mother of all those whom He loves as His brothers, whom He considers as "the members of His body," whom He divinely engenders to eternal life. "Thus she understood that in conceiving Jesus," affirms Father Chaminade, "she was to conceive Him whole and entire, that is to say, both His natural body and His Mystical Body because she could not separate Him from that which was to be made one with Him."¹

On the Cross, Jesus announced and revealed this mystery of the spiritual maternity of Mary over the whole infant Church. By giving her to John as a Mother, as the final token of His love, He gave her to each one of us, that we might take her "unto our own," as the well-beloved Mother of our Savior, and as our well-beloved Mother. That is why, when the Most Holy Trinity, through the glorious Humanity of Christ, glorified Mary in her soul and in her body, giving her the greatest glory that can be communicated to a simple creature, it is, in truth, all the "members of the Mystical Body" of Christ which are glorified and sanctified in the most beautiful way in the person of their Mother.

One cannot, in effect, separate the Mother from her children; the glory of the Mother is indeed that of her children; her riches and her

treasures are indeed their riches and their treasures. A mother who would hold back something, not wishing to share it with her children, would be, in that same measure, no longer a mother but a monster. Mary is not only a perfect Mother, good and loving towards her children, without any egotism, without any self-seeking, but she is more. Her Maternity is divine, founded, therefore, upon a plenitude of divine life, fructifying into love and mercy for her children. That is why if all the mysteries of the earthly life of Mary, the joyful, sorrowful, the glorious mysteries, as well as those of her glorious life in heaven, are all ordained toward the Most Holy Trinity and by Christ, they are at the same time all ordered toward us. These two movements of her heart, rooted in the same divine life and the same charity, are thus inseparable. With all her soul Mary is the servant of God, but she is at the same time the servant of our souls. Everything she lives, she lives as Virgin and Mother. Everything she can share with her children she desires to share with them. This is how the mystery of her Assumption is for all believers a magnificent divine sign, something unique, a "sign in heaven" of the infinite love of the Most Holy Trinity and of the heart of Jesus not only for Mary but for all her children as well. By the exaltation of Mary, divine wisdom shows in the most eloquent way both its love and the fundamental demands of that love.

By this mystery of the Assumption, God tells us His love, both present and eternal, since the mystery is for us as the promise of the full realization of the Covenant of God with His people and with all men. This mystery presents to us, in a fully perfected and consummate way, the definitive victory of the alliance of love in the blood and body of Christ over all the powers of evil and the consequences of sin. It is indeed true that the mystery of the Immaculate Conception already clearly shows us the merciful efficacy of the mystery of the Cross. The mercy of Christ crucified is of such power that it is capable not only of rehabilitating prodigal children by restoring to them their nuptial gown and their places as sons in the Father's house, but it can also completely preserve from original sin. It is by virtue of the merits of Christ crucified that Mary is without spot and without the corruption of original sin. Her immaculate privilege is as the purest fruit of Christian grace, the most intimate and radical victory of the mystery of the Cross; that privilege reveals how

radical was this victory, and how merciful, with a mercy at once infinitely strong and suave, capable of extirpating evil even in its most hidden roots. But it is only in the mystery of the Assumption that the victory of the Cross appears in its radiance, in its splendor, in all its glorious brilliance, for marvelous though the privilege of the Immaculate Conception is, it remains as an initial gift, as a hidden thing, the seed of an ever growing and intensifying grace which will go on putting down deeper roots. That is why all the divine riches contained in this initial privilege are fully revealed to us only in the mystery of the Assumption. In this mystery all the efficaciousness of the mercy of the Crucified is seen fulfilled in a completely actual and explicit manner. It shows us that nothing escapes this divine mercy. It teaches us that nothing is to be neglected, that everything in our intellectual and sensitive life must be transfigured, if we are to be worthy of our state as children of God, as children of her who is at once Mother of Christ and Mother of our souls.

Whatever is fulfilled in Mary in this mystery of the Assumption is for us a model of that which will one day be fulfilled for us. It is by the light of this mystery that we should try to understand all the breadth, all the depth, all the height of Christian mercy, all its efficacy, all its power. This mystery rises up before the believer to remind each one of how God loves the human creature to have exalted it with such splendor; and how He wishes His love to triumph over all and fully mature to beauty.

THE ASSUMPTION AND MARY'S LOVE FOR US

Mary's motherhood of our souls is a wholly Divine Maternity. It is the mystery of Christ in our souls which she wishes to see flower and become more intense. It is our life as sons of God, as members of Christ, with which she occupies herself with all the attention and all the vigilance of a maternal heart, of a heart which has suffered to give life to her children, and which knows the price of their redemption. This divine life as sons of God and members of Christ, while it first flowers in an entirely interior and spiritual way by the exercise of faith, hope and love, should take progressive possession of all our human activities. Is not the kingdom of God like to the leaven which is to permeate the whole

dough, and to the grain of mustard seed, which must first be buried and hidden in the earth in order to become a tree, "greater than all other herbs," and in whose branches the birds of the air will come to find shelter? (Matt. 13:32). The evangelical beatitudes which treat the perfection of the Christian life show the extent of that perfection. All purely human virtues must be transformed from within and enlivened by the divine love. To be a Christian, to be a son of God, is not only to belong to God, in the depths of one's soul. It consists further in allowing the love of God to take possession of our whole selves and of all that is truly human in us, so that the "whole face of our earth" may be renewed.

Because of the mystery of the Assumption, the maternal activity of Mary towards us is marvelously adapted to the whole flowering of our divine life. Without entering here into the theological discussions of the precise, proper mode of this maternal activity (i.e., whether it involves physical or moral instrumentality), we can easily understand that this maternal activity of Mary in our spiritual life can not be fully actualized without the mystery of the Assumption. By this mystery she is at once closer to the glorified humanity of Christ and closer to us. That she is closer to Christ we have already shown. That she is closer to us is evident since her glorified body remains the same body which she had on this earth, although now possessing a mode of being completely new, a glorious mode, which renders it perfect. This glorified body is "agile" and "subtle" as St. Thomas tells us; that is to say, it is wholly at the service of the glorified soul. Far from being an obstacle to the fulfilment of the most profound intentions of the glorified soul, it is a marvelous conjoined instrument. Thus we can understand how the mystery of the Assumption can promote and develop in us a greater intimacy with Mary, Mother of Christian souls.

The mystery of the Assumption especially emphasizes more deeply and intimately Mary's mission of mercy to her children. Mary's maternity is exercised in her role of Advocate. She never stops receiving our requests, presenting them to Jesus and interceding with Him for us. She pleads our case, the case of the guilty. As Advocate and Mother she takes our part, bringing out above all, our great weakness and our misery, trying thus to soften our guilt and to call down upon us the clemency and pardon of our Judge. She never stops saying to Jesus the words that she herself

heard from Him on Calvary: "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." At the same time she never stops encouraging us to accept with love, without bitterness, the chastisements and corrections which Christ inflicts upon us to restore us and make us better, by recalling to us how He suffered for us and how much she also has suffered for us. It is truly in sorrow and in tears that she has brought us forth for eternal life. As at Cana, she even anticipates our explicit requests, seeing our needs, our defects, our spiritual and temporal necessities; she speaks of us to Christ and asks Him to hasten for us the hour of mercy. But this Divine Maternity is not fulfilled alone in her role of Advocate, great and powerful though this role may be. It flows over also into her role as dispenser of the treasures of God. St. Ephrem forcefully states: "She is the giver of all goods, the great Lady who is mistress of all things after the Three Divine Persons, a second consoler after the Consoler, the mediatrix of the entire universe after the Mediator" (*Oratio ad Dieparam*).

Mary as Mother of the human race is not a stranger to the government of the wisdom of God over the universe. The Church does not hesitate to apply to the maternal regency of Mary that passage in Scripture which speaks of the wisdom of God: "In every people and in every nation I have had the chief rule . . . and in all these I sought rest" (Ecclus. 24:9sq). But in a quite special way Mary cooperates in the supernatural government of the Good Shepherd in regard to His sheep: "Then the creator of all things said to me: 'Let thy dwelling be in Jacob, and thy inheritance in Israel, and take root in my elect. . . . Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits. For my spirit is sweet above honey, and my inheritance above honey and the honeycomb. . . . He that hearkeneth to me, shall not be confounded: and they that work by me shall not sin' " (ibid. 12sq). In this divine cooperation Mary disposes our souls and our faculties for the action of the Holy Spirit, by rendering them docile to His movements and His good pleasure. She keeps far from us every obstacle which might cause us to deviate from this divine responsiveness. She teaches us to profit divinely from the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and to lose nothing of His gifts, but rather to make them fructify.

Let us recall the affirmation of St. Grignon de Montfort: "The Holy

Spirit is become fecund through Mary, whom He has espoused. It is with her and in her and from her that He has produced His masterpiece, which is God become man, and that He produces every day until the end of the world the predestined and the members of the body of that adorable head. That is why the more He finds Mary, His dear and indissoluble spouse, in a soul, the more He becomes operative to produce Jesus Christ in that soul and that soul in Jesus Christ. This is not to say that the Most Holy Virgin gives fecundity to the Holy Spirit. Rather it means that the Holy Spirit, through the intermediary of the Blessed Virgin, whom He sees fit to use, although He does not absolutely require her, reduces His fecundity to act by producing in her and through her Jesus Christ and His members."² To dispose us for grace and to permit us to profit divinely from it entails the pacification of our passions, our imaginings, and our memories. It is in this mysterious domain where what is called the "external forum" and the "internal forum" meet, there where our psychological "I" finds its proper climate, that the maternal influence of the Blessed Virgin is most specially necessary. It is there, in effect, that the greater part of our temptations and our combats take place. There is truly the battlefield *par excellence*, where the devil, as the "prince of this world," ceaselessly endeavors to reign, to gain ground, and where Mary, as Mother and as Queen of Heaven, exercises her influence immediately and incessantly, desiring to establish as rapidly as possible her maternal rule so that nothing may again oppose itself to the full communication of the love of her Son.

It is easy to understand that this role of Advocate, of Dispensatrix of the treasures of her God, that all this maternal influence cannot be perfectly efficacious, encompassing and penetrating except through the mystery of the Assumption, which permits the maternal mercy of Mary to give itself by using her heart, her imagination, her glorified sensitivity. The instrument is then perfectly adapted and rendered perfectly conatural to the aim which it should attain. As Advocate, Mary offers to Jesus, through love of us, her glorious heart. This offering is the irresistible argument which Mary ceaselessly uses to obtain the pardon of our sins and the fulfillment of our petitions. The glorious wounds of her heart are always presented to Jesus for us; they are an all-powerful arm whose strength upon the heart of her Well-Beloved she knows. Because

Mary is the Mother of our spiritual life we can speak of a certain presence of Mary at the heart of this life. That is why the mystery of the Assumption which permits this motherhood to exercise itself in a more efficacious way enables us to live in a more intimate and more encompassing presence of Mary.

It is this last aspect which we should like to point out here. It will permit us to grasp better the exact sense of certain extremely forceful expressions of the saints, of certain saints living in a very great intimacy with their Mother in heaven. St. Grignon de Montfort, for example, does not hesitate to say: "St. Augustine, surpassing himself and everything which I have just said, affirms that all the predestined, in order to be conformed to the image of the Son of God are in this world hidden in the bosom of the Most Blessed Virgin, where they are watched over, nourished, maintained, and increased by this good Mother until she brings them forth to glory after the death which is properly speaking the day of their birth."³ The Flemish mystic of the 17th century, Marie de Ste. Thérèse declares: "This sweet Mother . . . has taken me under her maternal conduct and direction, similar to the schoolmistress who guides the hand of the child to teach it to write. . . . She remains practically without interruption before my soul, drawing me to herself in such a lovable and motherly way, smiling to me, stimulating me, guiding me, instructing me in the way of the spirit and in the practice of the perfection of virtue. In this way I never lose for a single instant the taste for her presence beside that of God."⁴ "She produces the divine life by a perceptible influx of operative, prevenient, fortifying, excitant, or solicitous graces. . . . The nature of love is to unite one to the object loved. . . . In this sense, very tender, violent, burning and unitive love brings the soul who loves Mary to live in her, to melt in her, to be united to her, and to other effects and transformations."⁵ "Then God shows Himself in Mary and through Her as in a mirror."⁶

The principle to which one must always have recourse when it is a question of understanding the nature of this or that presence is the following: the agent is present in its effect and is present to it in the measure that it acts on it. God the Creator is intimately present to His creature because by His creative activity He reaches that which is most intimate in it. Mary is present to all her children in the measure that she

is their Mother and acts upon them to communicate to them her treasures. If this motherhood should possess such and such a modality, and thereby a more or less great efficacy, by this very fact the presence of Mary will be modified. But the mystery of the Assumption allows, as we have seen, her Divine Motherhood to act in a more efficacious, and more encompassing way. Consequently, the presence of Mary will be modified in the same way. Of course this presence, just as the maternity upon which it depends, since it is divine, is the object of our faith. We believe it without seeing it, without grasping it solely with our human intelligence. But the Holy Spirit can give us the experience of it in a more or less continuous way. By our living faith, wholly purified by the gift of understanding and the gift of wisdom, we can experience this Divine Motherhood, discover all the depths of divine mercy, of tenderness and strength which it comprises, understand intimately how much Mary is our well-beloved Mother, how much we are her children, how much her glorious Assumption allows her to pacify, as though from within and with infinite suavity, all our passions, our imaginings, our memories.

This experience, which is essentially divine and wholly spiritual can have certain ramifications and extensions in our psychological, affective, imaginative, and sensitive life, corresponding to the maternal influence of Mary on that psychology. We are then seized with a profound recollection which pacifies all our being and causes us to live intimately with the merciful love of the heart of our Mother. Our child's heart begins to beat in unison with the heart of its well-beloved Mother and to live fully with her silent and loving life, wholly dependent upon that of her Son. We must clearly distinguish this divine experience of the intimate presence of Mary in our soul and even in our psychological "I" from charismatic experiences, particular revelations, and apparitions (where, of course, the mystery of the Assumption can also have a very great role to play) but we cannot enter here into such a study which would carry us too far afield. Furthermore, these charismatic apparitions concern more the social and temporal aspects of the life of the Church than the properly supernatural life of each of the members of Christ.

We can understand better at the end of this study why, in the midst of the terrible anguish which afflicts our poor humanity, in the midst of most atrocious and most cruel tribulations which men must bear, Christ

in His mercy presents to us ever and ever more clearly the glorified humanity of His Mother and our Mother as His great triumph, His trophy of glory, in order that by contemplating it and loving it we may remain faithful and patient to the end. This mystery of the Assumption is for believers the divine answer to all the philosophies of hatred and death, since it proclaims the absolute, definitive, and eternal triumph of divine love over death and corruption.

¹ William Joseph Chaminade, *Marie la femme promise*, ed. J. Verrier, S.M. *Les Tracts Marials*, Nicolet, Quebec, Centre Marial Canadien.

² *Traité de la vraie dévotion à la Vierge*, ch. I, a. 1.

³ *Op. cit.*, Bk. I, Ch. I.

⁴ "L'Union mystique à la Vierge" in *Cahiers de la Vierge*, May 1936, p. 55.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

A LETTER TO A RECENT CONVERT

by

HENRY ST. JOHN, O.P.

BORN in England in 1891, Father St. John came into the Catholic Church during the first World War. The major interest of his apostolate as an English Dominican has been the cause of Christian unity, a cause he has been able to serve well because of his Anglican background and the tremendous influence exerted on him by Newman.

A frequent contributor to *Blackfriars*, Father St. John is best known in the United States for a book published in 1955, *Essays in Christian Unity*, a work hailed alike by Catholics and Anglicans as a major contribution to ecumenical discussion.

A LETTER TO A RECENT CONVERT

by

HENRY ST. JOHN, O.P.

Dear Friend,

I understand your perplexity over the recent announcement that the Holy Father is going to define the Assumption of Our Lady as a doctrine *de fide*, and therefore necessary to salvation, for all Catholics—and over the light-hearted headlines in the daily press about the Pope's "new dogma." You were taught during your instructions that the whole Faith was given by Our Lord to the Apostles and that the Church which He founded upon them was to guard and teach that Faith, but had no power to add to it.

You say that the proposed definition looks very much as if a new fact—the fact that Our Lady's body did not see corruption but was taken up to heaven after her death—is after all to be added to the Faith then delivered to the Saints. As a recent convert you confess to having noticed that those brought up in the Catholic Tradition with the habit of implicit trust in the Church and her rulers (even people with trained intelligences) do not seem to feel difficulties and to need explanations that are immediately felt and needed by many whose whole previous education has given them a less unquestioning outlook, and who have only lately made their submission to her authority. I will do my best to deal with the difficulty you put forward.

It is of course quite unthinkable that the Pope (or as I should prefer to say, the Church, because we must never get into the way of thinking that there are two infallibilities; there is only one, that of the Church though it has various modes of expression) can exercise infallibility in faith and morals by adding new truths to what is called the original deposit. To claim that would be in direct contradiction of everything the

Church has ever said about herself. There is only one source from which doctrinal definition can come and that is from the declared mind of the Church (her teaching *magisterium*). This mind may be declared in several ways: by the teaching of her ordinary *magisterium*, diffused throughout the Church, without specific definition by the highest authority; by a General Council when its definitions have been ratified by the authority of the Church in the person of her supreme Bishop—the Pope; or by the Pope in consultation with the universal episcopate; or by the Pope alone without such consultation; this latter method might be necessary in emergency, but historically has probably never been used.

The subject matter of this declaration of the mind of the Church must be what is and is not the Faith, i.e., what was or was not originally *deposited* in her mind by Our Lord, primarily as a life to be embraced and lived in faith by the faithful (*ecclesia discens*) and to be preached, safeguarded and defined by her authority only in order to implement this life of faith (*ecclesia docens*). But a truth may be “in the deposit” *explicitly*, as the Virgin Birth was from the very beginning, or *implicitly*, as the Immaculate Conception was before it became explicit and was defined. When we say that a truth is implicit and in the deposit of Faith we mean that it is contained, unperceived by the faithful, in some other truth which is held explicitly. In process of time by a deepening of insight in the faithful, which is the work of the Holy Spirit in the Mystical Body of Christ, what was formerly implicit comes to be explicitly realized. But there are different ways in which one truth may be implicit in another; it may follow by metaphysical necessity from the nature of the truth in which it is contained; or it may follow not from the nature of things themselves, but because in fact it has seemed good to Almighty God to order things in that particular way. For instance, that Christ is God made man is a truth explicit in the deposit from the first. But the Church at different times has declared certain things to be facts which were implicit in this; that He had a human soul, a human will, a human mind. These facts follow by necessity from the truth that to become man involves the taking of a complete human nature, and a complete human nature necessarily contains a soul, a will, a mind. Thus they are realized and accepted by the faithful through an act of grace-given Faith, but logical and metaphysical reasoning has been used in the

elucidation of its content. The Church has also declared certain things to be facts which do not follow from the truths in which they are implicit by necessity, but because God wills to order it so. The faithful perceive and accept these as facts by grace-given Faith (which includes the working of the gifts of the Holy Ghost) because it creates in them a deeper insight into the ways of God, but here, in the elucidation of the content of this faith, it is not metaphysical reasoning that has been used by the faithful but an instinct to look for action in God which will be congruous with truths they already know as revealed. In other words, the details have always been in the picture but they are only progressively perceived by the Faith of the whole Mystical Body. The supernatural certitude of Faith, it must be remembered, does not necessarily require a starting point of human certainty. The natural groundwork of a firm faith may well be a sense of what is fitting, a conjecture or a probability. It can hardly be said even that our faith in Our Lord's resurrection has human certainty concerning the empty tomb or the nature of the resurrection appearances as a necessary starting point.

From all that has been said so far it will, I hope, be clear that there is a good deal of confusion (not always dissipated by the theologians) in the use of the word "Tradition." Many doctrines in the deposit of Faith have been held explicitly from the beginning; we can see them clearly in the pages of Holy Scripture and are conscious at once that they have been handed down orally from apostolic times; but even here the mind of the Church has clarified them by her daily *magisterium* and her official corrections of false teaching. On the other hand many doctrines were in the deposit originally as implicit. These are made explicit by the deepening insight of the faithful (the product of both devotion and theology) under the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit. In this way new insights into already known truths have continuously enlarged the mind of the Church by being incorporated into her consciousness and proclaimed in her teaching. Tradition then is identical with the conscious mind of the Church at any given period of history. It increases, as it were, in volume, yet adds nothing to itself but what was latent there from the beginning. From the first the truth that Our Lady was full of grace was explicit in the Church's mind; but its implications and more exact meaning have become clearer in course of time in her consciousness, and in consequence

she has formulated them with increasing precision under Our Lord's promised guidance.

I will now go on to illustrate what has been said so far by showing its bearing on some truths which are part of the deposit of Faith but in the beginning were implicit only. You will see that I have made a selection; the same principles are equally applicable to other truths with which I shall not deal.

(a) The first truth of this kind I have chosen is the perpetual virginity of Our Lady. Holy Scripture is quite definite about the fact of the Virgin Birth, but apart from the mind of the Church we have no certain knowledge that Our Lady's subsequent virginity is also a fact—Scripture is ambiguous about it. We appeal therefore to Tradition; but in what sense? Do we mean that the Church certifies that Our Lady handed on the knowledge of her perpetual virginity to St. John; St. John (perhaps) to St. Polycarp and St. Polycarp to St. Irenaeus and so on in succession down the centuries? Or do we mean that the mind of the Church, having hitherto held this belief as implicit in the Virgin Birth, began, when doubt was cast on it, to see by supernatural insight that it was indeed a fact, the starting point for this realization being its fittingness and the incongruity of its denial. There is no certain indication, I think, in any ecclesiastical writer that the former alternative is what took place. St. Jerome had an argument on the subject with his contemporary Helvidius, and it would seem from the terms in which he answered his opponent that it is the latter which is the more likely.

(b) My second instance is the doctrine that Our Lady and the saints hear our prayers. This was a belief of slow growth. It is unlikely, I suppose, that the Apostles practised any kind of invocation of saints. The custom only began to develop apparently with the extensive martyrdoms of the great persecutions of post-apostolic times. The belief is rooted in the doctrine of the communion of saints and that the saints pray for us; but that they hear our prayers and that therefore we should pray directly to them is only congruous with it and does not necessarily follow from it. But the mind of the Church under divine guidance realized its truth and incorporated it into her teaching.

(c) A third doctrine which illustrates our point is the inspiration of Holy Scripture. Did St. John, for example, or St. Paul know that they

were inspired? We do not know. The fact of inspiration was recognized because Our Lord's teaching was founded upon the Old Testament. We know from the New Testament that the Apostles claimed that they proclaimed the Gospel by a special *charisma* analagous to that which inspired the prophets of the Old Testament. When their preaching was written down in Epistles and Gospels, the Church very early, and possibly before the end of the apostolic age, began to see that many of these writings were inspired as the writings of the Old Testament had been. But it is clear from history that the inspiration of some books came to be regarded as certain only by degrees by deepening insight of the mind of the Church guided by the Holy Spirit. The final and definitive ruling as to the content of the Canon was not made until the Council of Trent.

(d) Last of all we may take the Immaculate Conception as another case in point. We have no means of knowing whether the Apostles had any idea of it. Neither they nor Our Lady herself could have known it except by revelation, and there is no evidence in Scripture or Tradition that Our Lord told them. It is however clear that very early the mind of the Church, dwelling on the words of the Angel Gabriel to Our Lady, "Hail! full of grace," and on her response to God's message, saw her as absolutely pure and sinless—the absolute opposite of evil. This is the basis of the primitive teaching about Our Lady as the second Eve, found in St. Irenaeus, so closely related by tradition with St. John himself, and in St. Justin Martyr. The foundations of this doctrine are firmly laid in Scripture and it contains by implication the complete truth of Our Lady's position in the economy of redemption and grace, as it has been drawn out by the mind of the Church through the centuries. During this process controversies arose among theologians as to the exact nature of original sin and as to how Our Lady could be both sinless and redeemed. Subsequently as a joint result of devotion and controversy, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a deeper insight into how this could be was reached and the doctrine of her sinless conception was certified as a fact by the supreme *magisterium* of the Church.

So it seems to me to be with the Assumption. Did the Apostles know of the fact? They may have, but if they did there is a complete lack of evidence of it. No trace of the tradition occurs in any ecclesiastical writer until the fifth century, and if it existed in an explicit form from apostolic

days it is difficult to explain an economy so profound and so lasting. The legends which immediately sprang up around belief in it when this did appear are apocryphal and no detail of them is historically reliable. But what is certain is that in the course of history Our Lady's place in the economy of redemption, her mediatory and intercessory office, and the implications of her active cooperation in bringing about the Incarnation have become progressively more deeply realized in the Church's consciousness. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries particularly she has seen with greatly increased clarity that sound faith in the Incarnation itself is indissolubly bound up with belief in Our Lady's high place in the economy of grace. Why did the Church insist so strongly on her perpetual virginity? Because Catholic instinct, the product of the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost in Christ's Mystical Body, taught the faithful that to attack that was in the end to attack the Incarnation. Why did the Church come to insist more and more on her complete sinlessness? (The theological controversy was an interlude.) Because Catholic instinct realized that to deny her sinlessness and total exemption from the dominion of sin would lead to the denial of her virginity and in the end to denial of the Incarnation itself. Why, finally, did belief in her Assumption become universal in East and West at a comparatively early date? (The legendary element was consequent on, and not antecedent to, belief in the fact.) Because Catholic instinct early saw with deepening insight that incorruption was the fitting concomitant of sinlessness in her from whose flesh God Himself drew the flesh of His human nature, and that in consequence this privilege had been granted to God's Mother. And so knowledge of her Assumption comes to strengthen faith in her sinlessness, just as faith in her sinlessness and absolute purity is a bulwark of defense to true and strong faith in the Incarnation of her Son.

I confess that up to now I have had no enthusiasm for this definition. Why define, I have asked myself, what is already believed by all? But the Holy Spirit guides the Church and enables her rulers by a special supernatural instinct to sense where danger lies and what is the right method of approach to the solution of the fundamental problems of our age. The denial of the Incarnation and, in consequence, of Our Lord's authority, is the root cause of the moral chaos which has brought

our world to such a pass, and the greatest obstacle to the recognition, by men of good will, of Our Lord's authority is the fact that Christians themselves are disunited and at odds with each other. The root cause of this disunion is not disagreement about a number of different doctrines; it is the inability to recognize as true the nature, constitution and government that Our Lord created for the Church which He founded and commissioned to preach the Gospel in His name. The definition of a doctrine such as this with great solemnity is a startling and arresting comment on the nature of Christ's Church on earth and on the reality of her teaching authority. The Church is wiser than we are, and her determination to emphasize by definition this, to the outer world, extravagant doctrine is a guarantee that in the long run the result of her action will be a deepening of faith in the supernatural among those who are capable of it, and will lead them in ways we do not realize to a fuller knowledge of the truth.

I hope that what I have written may be a help.

Yours sincerely,

Henry St. John, O.P.

THE ASSUMPTION AND THE LITURGY

by

CLEMENT MORIN, P.S.S.

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THE ASSUMPTION AND THE LITURGY

by

CLEMENT MORIN, P.S.S.

SACRED LITURGY is dogma in prayer. In this social worship, our holy Mother Church teaches the catholic truth, not in the logical way proper to speculative studies, but in a fragmentary manner and with the freedom of the children of God.

The divine truth expressed in sacred liturgy is mainly the mystery of Christ, ever present and active in His Church. Guided by the Holy Spirit through divine revelation, the Church achieves a deeper and fuller knowledge of this mystery and is invited to contemplate the life of the Blessed Virgin, her influence on the history of salvation, the wonderful history which is given us as actual and present during the liturgical year. And because Mary stayed with Jesus from the first moment of his Incarnation to the end of his redemptive career, her presence in the mystery of Christ will be felt and realized in feasts and solemnities inspired by Scripture and Tradition.

To Tradition belong the two most important feasts of the Marian year, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Our Lady, the only two in the rite of double of the first class: the Immaculate Conception at the dawn of his first Advent; the Assumption during the time of our hope for the parousia of His glorious return.

And yet we may say that the feast of the Assumption surpasses all the other feasts of the Blessed Virgin, even the feast of her Immaculate Conception, by reason of its historical origin and of the eloquence with which the Church conveys her belief in this mystery.

We shall therefore try to trace this feast to its origin, first in the Western Church, then in the Church of the East, which in course of time influenced the Western Church.

THE FEAST IN THE WESTERN CHURCH

The Assumption of Our Lady boasts the unique privilege of being the most ancient of Mary's feasts, commemorating an individual mystery of the Mother of God. A general celebration, which summed up for worship all that is known of Mary, was first established, and was called Memory of St. Mary. However, a particular Church, namely the Gallican Church, never celebrated this general solemnity, but from the very outset celebrated the mystery of the Assumption.

During the first three centuries or the persecution era, there was no feast of the Blessed Virgin. The liturgy was dominical, a weekly commemoration of Easter Sunday. It was only after the year 200 that the local martyrs and deceased bishops began to be venerated at the place of their burial and on the day of their death, called *dies natalis*, day of their birth in heaven. Thus Christ was honored in His well-known witnesses, by their nearest brothers.

The Church, having been approved by the Emperors and delivered from the persecutions which prevented a free and open exercise of social worship, developed and organized her liturgy. Christmas was established in Rome, on December 25, as a substitute for the pagan *natalis invicti*, the birth of the invincible divinity, the Sun.

The mysteries of the birth and childhood of Jesus called the attention of the faithful to the Virgin-Mother, and their reverence was socially expressed in the first Marian feast, the Memory of St. Mary, celebrated according to local choice, whether on Christmas, the last Sunday of Advent, the Octave of Christmas or on some other date not too distant. Some traces of that first feast still remain in the liturgy of our day: for instance, on the fourth Sunday of Advent, the Offertory *Ave Maria* and the Communion *Ecce Virgo*; on New Year's Day, the vespers entitled *Natale Sanctae Mariae* in the Monza Antiphonary and the second Sunday after Epiphany, also called the Epiphany of the Virgin.

In the Gallican Church, for some unknown reason, the Memory of St. Mary was never celebrated. Instead of that general solemnity, we find, during the first half of the sixth century, a feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, with the most obvious liturgical formulae, to praise her death, resurrection and assumption, body and soul, into heaven. A similar

exception is to be found, about the same time, in the Eastern Churches, Egypt and Syria, where a feast of the Assumption was added or superimposed upon the general feast.

When was the Gallican feast of the Assumption celebrated for the first time? It seems possible to go back to the beginning of the sixth century. Did not St. Césaire of Arles, who died in 543, know of it? St. Gregory of Tours, who died in 594, gives various statements about the feast of the eleventh month, i.e., January 18. Here are a few of his words concerning the meaning of the feast:

By order of the Lord, her sacred body was carried on a cloud to be reunited to her soul in heaven, where now with the elect she enjoys eternal bliss.¹

In the Gallican Mass, a number of Collects and the Preface express, without any doubt, what is meant by the Assumption of Our Lady. We quote a few lines from the Preface:

The Virgin Mother of God returned to Christ, having left this world without assuming any of its corruption, not even that of the tomb. You were received with gladness in your Assumption, by him whom you had piously received, and through faith conceived. Being not conscious of any earthly guilt, you could not be kept enclosed in the rock.²

One may ask, is it possible to explain why, instead of the general feast, the Memory of Mary which was common to the Western and the Eastern Churches alike, a particular feast, the Assumption, was established in Gaul. The apocryphal story of the *Transitus Mariae* written in Syriac by Pseudo-Meliton cannot explain it. Was it not composed about the year 550, as it seems probable, and at that time, the feast of the Assumption was already commonly celebrated in Gaul?

The choice of the fictitious name "Meliton" was made by the unknown author of the *Transitus Mariae*. We might venture an hypothesis as to the reason for that choice: Meliton was one of St. John's disciples. And this reminds us of a fact concerning the Johannine tradition: directly received from St. John by Polycarp of Smyrna, it was transmitted to St.

Irenaeus, who later became Bishop of Lyons, head of the Gallican Church. It is not improbable that the Assumption of Our Lady is a part of this tradition. Needless to say, we possess no written account of the fact, but this is easily explained: the controversies and errors of the time afforded no opportunity to write about the Assumption. On the other hand, we may assume that tradition, which is essentially oral teaching, is at the root of the doctrine contained and expressed by the feast. If the Church of Irenaeus and his successors still preserved such a tradition, the Assumption of Our Lady had to be established as the first feast of Our Lady, in the way Easter is for Our Lord the first feast of the liturgical year, "*solemnitas solemnitatum*." Is not the Assumption the crowning of Mary's mysteries and a supernatural wonder parallel to the resurrection of Our Lord, the mystery whose importance is extolled by St. Paul and divine liturgy?

II. THE FEAST IN THE EASTERN CHURCH

From the beginning of the fifth century in Constantinople and Asia Minor, the Memory of St. Mary was solemnized on Christmas day or on the following day. Yet the creation of a Marian cycle was not achieved before the middle of the following century, under Justinian. This cycle begins with the Annunciation on March 25, obviously bound up with Christmas. The second feast, Our Lady's Nativity, falls on September 8; the third, Conception of Mary, on December 9. The fourth is Mary's Slumber or *Dormitio*. The term is used by Our Lord and St. Paul to mean that death is not eternal.

The title of the general feast, Memory of St. Mary, was the counterpart to Memory of the Martyrs, which means their *dies natalis*, the day when they were born into heaven. Therefore, Memory contains virtually death and resurrection, i.e., in the case of Mary, her *Dormitio* and *Assumptio*. It was to be expected that the phrase, Memory of St. Mary, would one day give place to the double expression *Dormitio* and *Assumptio*.

We must examine two special cases, presenting a particular analogy with the Gallican feast: The Church of Alexandria in Egypt and The Church of Syria.

In Alexandria, at the beginning of the fifth century, perhaps even earlier, the Memory of St. Mary was observed on a date corresponding to January 16. This was the dedication day of a church erected at Deir-el-Moharraq, where the Holy Family in exile is said to have dwelt. About the middle of the sixth century, this Memory of St. Mary was called the day of her death and August 9 was then chosen for the celebration of a new feast entitled Assumption of the Virgin's Body or Assumption of the Mother of God.

The Syrian Church, at the end of the sixth century, knew three commemorations of the Blessed Virgin, all outgrowths of the Memory of St. Mary. The first commemoration was fixed two days after Christmas, the second on May 15, and the third on August 13. This latter was the dedication day of a church erected by the Roman matron Ikelia, between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, on the traditional place of the Virgin's rest, during her journey the day before Christ was born.

In Syria, August 13 was Mary's Slumber, rest being changed into eternal rest, or more precisely, the last sleep of the Virgin. We note that the Gospel of the Mass contains Jonah's sign, thus foretelling a resurrection after three days. August 15 is now marked to become Mary's Easter after her Good Friday of August 13, the Assumption after the Slumber or *Dormitio*.

Perhaps this is why Emperor Maurice, a contemporary of St. Gregory the Great, when wishing to prescribe a uniform day for the celebration of the Memory of St. Mary in his empire, finally chose August 15. On this occasion, he also restored the church erected a little more than a century before, upon the Virgin's house at Gethsemani. Hereafter, this church was to be called "Sanctuary of Maurice at Gethsemani for the Memory of the St. Theotokos" or Mother of God. And because the Byzantines considered the feast of August 15 as the *Dormitio*, the sanctuary became the Virgin's grave. In the homilies delivered on that day, we notice that Mary's resurrection is also mentioned and commemorated with her assumption and unceasing mediation in heaven.

III. INFLUENCE OF EASTERN DEVELOPMENTS ON THE LATIN CHURCH

We have just seen the feast of August 15 was established at the

beginning of the seventh century. Towards the end of the same century, it was to be received by Rome and spread in the Western Church. Pope Sergius (687-701) *natione Syrus* who belonged to a Syrian family lately emigrated into Sicily, a country where the Latin and Greek rituals were both kept, decided to bring in the Greek Marian cycle. Four feasts were established, one of them being the *Dormitio Mariae*. This title is recorded in the *Liber Pontificalis*, in an account about Pope Sergius, and in several liturgical books sent to various countries. *Depositio*, *Natale* and *Pausatio*, i.e., burial, birth and rest are occasionally used for *Dormitio*. Later, Assumption was substituted for *Dormitio*.

In Gaul, the Assumption of Our Lady had been the Marian feast and the only one, for about two centuries. They admitted the new feast under its first title, *Dormitio Mariae*. When the Roman liturgy was introduced, August 15 had already become the feast of the Assumption. In a sacramentary sent to Charlemagne by Pope Adrian I, August 15 is termed the *Assumptio Sanctae Virginis*. The Gallican Church, confronted with the difficulty of celebrating the same feast twice a year, tried various solutions. Charlemagne's Capitulary of the year 810 reveals that anxiety: "About the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, we need further information to decide."

Finally the Gallican feast of January 18 was suppressed and, for its venerable Mass of the sixth century, a Roman composition was substituted. Three years after the above mentioned Capitulary, the Emperor proclaimed August 15 a Holy Day to be kept by all without exception. Since that time, the Assumption has never lost its primacy among the Marian feasts. Forty years after Charlemagne's decree, Pope St. John IV added an octave to the feast.

Our present day Mass holds few elements of the Roman sacramentary: for instance, the Secret and the Gospel, the latter belonging to the liturgy of the feast established by Maurice. We note also, that in the Offertory only, the Assumption is said to include Mary's resurrection. This is expressed not by words, but by the musical commentary. The Gregorian melody belongs to the octave of Easter and is joined to the verse: *Quem quaeritis, surrexit sicut dixit*. "You are looking for one who is not here, but has risen from the dead." Participating in her Son's glory, Mary is not here, she has risen from the dead, *Assumpta est Maria in caelum*.

Let us sum up what has been said. The first feast of Our Lady is a synthesis of her mysteries, Memory or Solemnity universally observed. A notable exception is found in the Gallican Church, where the first feast commemorates a special mystery, *incomprehensibile mysterium* (as the introduction to the Mass says) the Assumption, whereas the general solemnity is ignored. In the Western Church, the Memory of St. Mary will expand into a Marian cycle and sooner or later assume the title of the Assumption.

Is any case to be assigned to the birth of the Gallican feast and outgrowth just mentioned? Do the Apocrypha explain it? Are these writings more than fancy or pious invention? In the field of doctrine, wrote Fr. Jugie in his oft-quoted book on the death and Assumption of Mary, the Apocrypha are in their own way, witnesses of the ancient tradition.

If it is granted that something of the ancient tradition remains in the Apocrypha, may we not consider as a privileged witness of tradition, this Gallican feast and its venerable Mass, which holds the reality of the Assumption, as unquestionably as any of our Christian dogmas? The answer belongs to another field of sacred theology.

¹ "Dominus susceptumque corpus sanctum in nube deferri jussit in paradisum, ubi nunc resumpta anima, cum electis ejus exultans, aeternis bonis . . . fruatur." (Migne PL 71, 713)

² "Virgo Dei Genitrix de mundo migravit ad Christum, quae nec de corruptione suscepit contagium, nec resolutionem pertulit in sepulchro. Ab ipso suscepta es in Assumptione feliciter quem pie suscepisti conceptura per fidem. Quae terrae non eras conscia, non teneret rupes inclusa." (Migne PL 72, 245)

THE ART OF THE ASSUMPTION

by

JOSEPH DUHR, S.J.

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The only one of his several books to be translated into English is *The Glorious Assumption of the Mother of God* (Kennedy, 1950). Father Duhr died in 1953.

THE ART OF THE ASSUMPTION

by

JOSEPH DUHR, S.J.

THE MODE of representing Mary's Assumption has its origin in that of the Lord's Ascension.¹ The Acts of the Apostles uses the words "He was taken up"² to describe the last dramatic action in the life of the divine Savior. The words insinuate that Christ, mounting towards heaven, has been taken, seized, captured by an invisible force which draws Him towards the heights. The Psalmist had already used the same figure to speak of his thanksgiving to God for deliverance from his affliction. "(He) took me; and received me out of many waters."³ The first artists who have tried to represent the Ascension have translated the text of the Acts with scrupulous realism. A fragment of a sarcophagus at Clermont⁴ and an ivory diptych of the fourth century preserved in the Museum of Munich⁵ show Our Lord scaling the slope of a mountain, while from the clouds there comes forth a hand that takes Him by the arm to lift Him up to the habitation of glory.

The first Assumption we know of is presented along similar lines. It adorns the principal side of a fourth century sarcophagus preserved in the Church of Santa Engracia at Saragossa.⁶ Framed by more usual scenes from the Gospels: the cure of the man born blind, of the woman with a flow of blood, and the miracle of Cana, there is seen between two persons (Apostles) a woman wrapped in a cloak in an attitude of prayer. The scene recalls almost exactly the figure engraved at the bottom of an ancient gilded chalice. But on the chalice the artist has taken care to designate the persons by name, Mary, St. Peter and St. Paul.⁷ On the sarcophagus the person placed on the right of the Virgin is easily recognized as St. Peter. The round head and the curly beard and hair are his

traditional features. They are given to us by the small second century bronze disc found by Boldetti in the cemetery of Domitilla where the heads of the two founders of Christian Rome face each other.⁸ Also by the two frescos, executed in the third and fourth centuries in the church of Sts. Peter and Marcellinus⁹ (and in the cemetery of Domitilla).¹⁰ The head of the second Apostle has vanished as a result of mutilation. With Dom Leclercq we can see in this figure on the Spanish sarcophagus a rudimentary Assumption. In any case it seems certain that this is the form under which the first Christian art began to conceive the Virgin's Assumption.

Contrary to this opinion, the Benedictine Fr. G. Llopart regards the "woman received by God" as a symbol of the city of Saragossa, an interpretation he bases on Clement Prudentius.¹¹

I. MARY "CARRIED UP" TO HEAVEN

The Gospel according to St. Luke expresses itself differently from the Acts of the Apostles in relating the Ascension. "Whilst He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up to heaven."¹² Syria applies herself to reproducing faithfully in her art St. Luke's expression. On a panel of the door of St. Sabina at Rome, where Syrian influence is undeniable, the new image seems to have its origin. Christ, in the presence of only four Apostles, is almost snatched away from the earth by two powerful angels who lean towards Him and grasp Him by the arms.¹³ Soon Christ appears to us soaring above the Apostles *carried by angels*. A miniature in the Rabula manuscript¹⁴ and some ampullas from Monza, the gift of Pope Gregory the Great to the queen Theodolinda,¹⁵ show Christ seated or standing and enveloped completely by the outline of an immense halo, a kind of rigid frame which the angels hold up in their hands and carry towards heaven, while below, the Apostles, stunned and saddened, look on the Master Who is leaving them. Mary's Assumption borrows its essential features from this representation. The Virgin, however, keeps her ancient attitude of prayer. Further, a text from the pseudo-Melito encourages the artists to show Mary rising to heaven and *carried by angels*. At the end of the narrative the divine Master repeats His promise to the Apostles to remain with them forever, before leaving

them. "And immediately," the text continues, "the Lord was raised up into a cloud and was received into heaven, and *the angels with Him, carrying the blessed Mary into the paradise of God.*"¹⁶ This is the form under which Mary is shown on the embroidered cloth of the seventh or eighth century preserved in the Cathedral of Sens. In broad elliptical medallions, placed side by side, Mary in prayer is seen to soar above the ten Apostles who hold a cross in their right hand. She is attended by two angels who with one hand hold up a palm of triumph and with the other seem to sustain the flight of the risen Mother.¹⁷ Without doubt it is under this form also that the faithful could already contemplate on feast days the Assumption pictured on the precious vestments offered to the Church of St. Mary Major by the Popes Hadrian I¹⁸ and Pascal I.¹⁹ At any rate, we still possess an ivory of St. Gall, of perhaps the eighth or ninth century, where Mary in prayer is accompanied by four angels who with raised hands gaze upon and admire her. Here the Apostles are absent. But that the image may be well understood, the artist has carved above it in the frame the words: "The Ascension of the Holy Mary."²⁰

The Syrian formula of the Assumption will allow the German miniaturists of the eleventh and twelfth centuries to transform the Falling Asleep itself, which was bequeathed by Byzantium to the West. Byzantine art, which seems to have ignored the Assumption properly so called, was content to represent the Falling Asleep. Both fresco and mosaic lay Mary out upon her funeral bed among the Apostles miraculously assembled around her. Christ Himself is standing in the center of the scene. He welcomes the soul of His Mother under the form of a child, and commits it to the two angels that accompany Him to carry it to the dwelling of beatitude. All these details are taken from the Apocrypha. After having given His commands to the Apostles for the burial of Mary, "the Lord," according to the pseudo-Melito, "gave the soul of our holy Mother Mary to His Archangel Michael, the overseer of Paradise and the leader of the Hebrew people, and Gabriel the Archangel went along with it."²¹ John of Thessalonica repeats in his turn that "the Lord upon receiving her soul confided it to the care of Michael, after He had wrapped it in veils of shining splendor."²² During the Ottonian epoch, about the tenth century, numerous ivories render the subject popular in Germany.²³ The

German miniaturists made themselves masters of this mode in their turn, but they transformed it slightly and made it a representation of the Assumption. In a miniature of the eleventh century Gospel Book of Bertold, preserved at Salzburg, the child that the divine Master hands to the angel is no longer a baby wrapped in veils but on a small scale the exact replica of the Virgin whom four Apostles are laying in the sarcophagus.²⁴ To dispel all uncertainty a Book of Collects of Hildesheim from the eleventh century breaks the scene into parts. In one miniature Christ presents to two angels the soul of Mary pictured in the usual guise of a small child; in another the same angels carry to heaven a frame in which Mary is seen from head to waist, while from above the hand of God stretches out of heaven to welcome the risen Virgin.²⁵ Thus the German miniaturists hold to the Syrian form of the Assumption and complete in a naïve manner the scene of the Falling Asleep. Other eleventh century miniaturists show the glorified Virgin either from head to waist or fully, *enclosed in a round or oval nimbus* which the angels hold and carry towards heaven.²⁶

When they read the Apocrypha themselves, the artists of the West will soon imagine a new Assumption. The great happening will no longer unfold in the deathroom of the Virgin, but in the Valley of Josaphat close to her tomb. A variant in the Coptic narrative of the Assumption tells that on August 15 the divine Master again appeared to His disciples who were gathered around the tomb of the Virgin, and told them that the soul of Mary was about to descend from heaven. It goes on: "We looked right in front of us, and behold! we saw a great chariot of light drawn by Cherubim, and in it the holy Virgin Mary was seated shining brighter than the sun and the moon. . . . At the call of the Lord the body of the Virgin, His Mother, arose from the tomb. He infused her soul again into her body and we saw her living as before. And our Lord stretched out His hand and placed her with Him in the chariot of glory."²⁷ The pseudo-Melito keeps to essentially the same story. When the Apostles had buried the body of Mary in the Valley of Josaphat, Jesus appeared to them again. In the name of all others Peter prayed the Lord to raise His Mother and to take her with Him to heaven. "Then the Lord said: 'Let your desire be fulfilled!' And He commanded the Archangel Michael to fetch the holy soul of Mary. And soon, when the Archangel Gabriel

had taken away the stone from the entrance to the tomb, the Lord said, 'Arise, My beloved, My nearest of kin. Since you have not felt the disorder of the flesh by contact with man, you shall not suffer the body's corruption in the grave.' And at once Mary arose . . . and after He had embraced her, the Lord gave her to the angels to escort her into Paradise."²⁸

In the tympanum above the left door of the west facade of Notre Dame in Paris, the door of the Virgin, the sculptor has reproduced the legendary story with admirable art. Our Lord has just descended among the Apostles gathered around the Virgin's tomb. With the tranquility of omnipotence, He touches Mary's extended body with His left hand, while the right is raised in a gesture of benediction. From his partly open mouth have just sprung the words, "Arise, My beloved, My nearest of kin." Obeying the invitation of her Son, Mary raises herself from the tomb. Gracious and smiling she awakes from sleep and joins her hands in a gesture of adoration and recognition. The two angels, St. Michael and St. Gabriel, who are placed at the head and foot of the sarcophagus, prepare with a movement both spontaneous and graceful to carry her away decorously in the very cloth that served for her shroud.²⁹ A few years before at Senlis another sculptor had been content to represent the angels crowding in nimble flight around Mary resurrected to carry her to the abode of happiness. Nothing is more exquisite than these smiling angels, almost immaterial under the narrow folds of their tunics. "All lean forward, attentive and joyous, living and charming with feeling and poetry."³⁰ An Italian painter of the fourteenth century, Taddeo di Bartolo, has also sought to fix with his brush the moment when Christ raises His Mother. Carried on the wings of angels, the divine Master comes down towards the tomb and stretches His hand towards Mary asleep in death. At this touch Mary raises herself above the coffin, ready to take flight.

In the sculpture of Notre Dame of Paris we do not see the Apostles scrutinize anxiously the empty tomb. A different apocryphal story, which was born towards the end of the tenth or the beginning of the eleventh century,³¹ is going to suggest this new attitude to the artists. It is the famous Euthymiac legend, or the legend of St. Thomas. The legend tells that St. Thomas, since he had arrived after Mary's burial, had the

tomb opened for himself. It was found empty, or containing no more than the funeral clothes, roses and lilies. Later, towards the beginning of the thirteenth century, an unpublished episode³² is attached to this account. It tells that the risen Virgin had left her cincture in the hands of St. Thomas. But there are some differences regarding the interpretation of this act. Some—such as Jacopo de Voragine, the author of the *Golden Legend*—see in it a sensible sign for the purpose of vanquishing the incredulity of the recalcitrant Apostles; others—and this is the version which especially made way in Italy—see in the cincture a pledge granted by Mary to the Apostle so he could convince the other Apostles of the truth of the Virgin's resurrection and Assumption, which he himself had looked on from the heights of the Mount of Olives. The city of Prato boasts possession of this precious cincture. They tell that a young man named Michele dei Dagomari brought it from Jerusalem in 1141 on his return from the first Crusade. He had found it, they add, in the house of a Greek priest whose daughter he sought in marriage. In 1312 an attempt at robbery, which almost succeeded, determined the city to build a special sanctuary beside the cathedral to protect the relic from all danger of theft.

A disciple of Giotto, Agnolo Gaddi, was commissioned about 1365 to decorate the famous Chapel of the Cincture with frescos, and he is without doubt one of the first to reproduce the episode.³³ In the Botticelli painting preserved at Florence in the Uffizi gallery, we are made to assist at the unfolding of the whole drama. While Thomas contemplates the flight of the Virgin on the Mount of Olives and sees himself favored by her with the cincture, in the foreground the Apostles stare into the empty tomb. The most beautiful work, however, that this episode has inspired is that of Sodoma, the disciple of Leonardo da Vinci, in the Oratory of St. Bernardine at Siena. Before the eyes of the enraptured Apostles Mary arises from the sarcophagus filled to overflowing with roses and lilies. She is enthroned now on a rock-like cloud. She has undone her cincture, and with a gesture of exquisite kindness, that is emphasized by her look, her smile and her right hand extended to protect and bless, she lets the long flowing band slip from her left hand, while the kneeling Apostle, happy and amazed, receives it in his hands.³⁴ Even when the painters have St. Thomas mingle with the others around the tomb of the Virgin,

they sometimes place the cincture in his hands as a kind of identifying badge. Thus he appears in the resurrection of the Virgin by Taddeo di Bartolo, and in the coronation of Mary by Raphael.³⁵

Preoccupied solely with looking at and inspecting the empty tomb, the Apostles seem for a long time not to perceive the prodigy that is unfolding above their heads. The inspection of the tomb and the resurrection of the Virgin are separated into two sections, even in the same picture, and are not only separated but separate. We see this division in the picture of Taddeo di Bartolo and in Bartolomeo della Gatta's. Little by little, however, the Apostles raise their heads and begin to join in the glory of their Queen. Without taking an active part in the drama which is played above them, they guess it and begin to glimpse it. The works of Pinturicchio, of Raphael, of his disciple Jules Tomain and of Dürer³⁶ reflect this intermediary stage that prepares for the masterpiece of Titian.

While the Apostles examine the tomb and are associated little by little with the miracle which their Mother and Queen enjoys, Mary rises towards glory in the fulness of life she has gained. In picturing this ascension the artists are always inspired by the ancient Syrian tradition bequeathed to them by the miniaturists. Whether seated or standing, Mary remains enclosed in a rigid almond-shaped halo which the angels carry to heaven. The Sienese Simone Memmi, Lippo Memmi, Pietro Lorenzetti; the sculptors Andrea Orcagna,³⁷ Mino da Fiesole, and down to the della Robbias always keep to the old form. On the exterior walls of the apse of Notre Dame in Paris,³⁸ on the door of the Mandorla of the Basilica in Florence,³⁹ on the great door of the Cathedral of Magdeburg,⁴⁰ the same is true.

A frame so rigid, however, could not satisfy an esthetic feeling more in love with beauty, grace and harmony. Accordingly, we see this geometric outline give place more and more to a living nimbus. Masolino, at the beginning of the fifteenth century imagines a double row of angels around the Virgin; Perugino, Pinturicchio and Matteo Balducci frame the risen Virgin in an oval nimbus formed of two parallel lines between which appear the heads of small angels. At the end of the fifteenth century, on the eve of the height of the Renaissance, the artists remain thus enslaved to the ancient formula. A long time before, however, the genius of Donatello had inaugurated a new theme and outlined the way

of the future on the front of Cardinal Brancacci's sarcophagus. Around the Virgin he had sculptured living angels in impetuous flight, graced with a strong and supple motion. They dip, they soar, they glide into the clouds, raising the Mother up to the throne of her Son. The Virgin, seated, is admirable, grave and sad. She does not forget the poor banished children of Eve who sigh and weep in this valley of tears, and with hands joined in a gesture of tenderness and supplication she seems already to be interceding for them. She is the *Dolorosa* even in her triumph.⁴¹

We see that Donatello keeps an essential element of the old formula even though he breaks through it. Mary is carried by strong and powerful angels. This idea will be maintained for a long time to come. Even the Baroque period will be slow to forsake it. Guido Reni, Nicholas Poussin⁴² and even Rubens, in several of their Assumptions, will remember the ancient tradition. Well into the nineteenth century Pierre Proud'hon will picture two powerful angels carrying Mary to the habitation of glory.⁴³

II. MARY "MOUNTING" INTO HEAVEN

Theology, however, has affirmed unwaveringly since the Middle Ages that the Virgin was gifted with a marvelous agility, and that she had no need of other help in order to rise into heaven. Sodoma understands that the theological thought could be also the most esthetic. In his picture in the oratory of St. Bernardine, of which we have spoken above, the great pupil of Leonardo da Vinci places the Virgin in a nimbus of small mirthful angels who gambol among the clouds and crowd around their Queen.

We find all these advances, the fruit of groping but tenacious and continued effort, in that magnificent symphony where all is harmony, order and beauty: the *Assunta* of Titian. The great Venetian painter has borrowed from Correggio the glistening splendor of colors and the exuberance of life that is reflected in glorified bodies, and from Luini and Gaudenzio Ferrari the gathering and concentration of feeling. Never had such luminous radiance sprung from the Venetian palette. The Apostles, harmoniously grouped, tend with all their being towards their Mother, impatient to follow her uprising as though raised up by an irresistible desire, while they stand shrouded in the shadow that forever bathes a world subject to suffering despite its flashes of vision through

faith. And in a nimbus of agile and graceful little angels, her feet set lightly on vaporous insubstantial clouds, as though raised up by a strong and mysterious breeze that spreads wide her mantle of purple, her face shining with happiness and her eyes filled with ecstasy. Mary *lifts herself* towards an ocean of light, in the full maturity of her grace and beauty. And already above, God the Father, shown with marvelous foreshortening, all smiles and welcome, opens His arms lovingly and makes ready to welcome His privileged creature. The angel who accompanies Him, one of the most beautiful creations of the great Venetian painter, turns his eyes towards God, eyes quivering, as it were, with a repressed eagerness, and he awaits from Him the signal that will at last let him place on Mary's head the royal diadem he carries in his hands.⁴⁴ No artist has ever reproduced better the fulness of human happiness, alas! too uniquely human. To transform this overflowing voluptuousness into a more subtle spiritual ecstasy Titian needs the soul of Fra Angelico. Such as it is, however, the work merited the enthusiasm with which it was welcomed by the whole city of Venice. Artists will come to admire it and to profit by it. For Guido Reni, Paolo Veronese, Rubens himself and van Loon, Titian remains the master.

Titian does not, however, cause us to forget Correggio. Between 1525 and 1530 Antonio Allegri had undertaken to decorate the cupola of the Cathedral of Parma. With an enchanting art, that one would wish less sensual and naturalistic, he had painted there the flight of the Virgin towards the dizzying heights of heaven. Openly criticized by some, admired by others,⁴⁵ the work impressed all. It is from Correggio above all that the Baroque artists are going to learn the art of giving to Mary as she rises to heaven an irresistible transport. Domenichino in the church of Santa Maria in Trastevere, Pozzi in St. Ignatius will reveal that they are disciples of Correggio. In the picture of Annibal Carrache the Virgin with ecstatic face and eyes fixed on heaven lifts herself above the tomb with the magnificent surge of a great bird taking flight. Radiant, she arises towards the light. Guido Reni in Italy, Pacheco in Spain, Philippe de Champaigne in France, and above all Rubens, the sumptuous painter who will undertake to paint the Assumption a dozen times without repeating himself,⁴⁶ continue in their own manner the grand art of Correggio.

In order to give a still more perfect delineation of the Assumption, however, it was necessary to disengage it further from every earthly tie and from every savor of the Apocrypha. Since Giotto religious art had begun to mingle later personages in the Gospel scenes. From this time St. Francis is seen kneeling on Golgotha, contemplating the Crucified. In the fifteenth century this attempt at actualization becomes more and more generalized. The artists took up the habit of mixing other saints, bishops, virgins or martyrs, with the Apostles, the witnesses of the Assumption. Not content to be joined with the Apostles the other saints some times substitute for them. The historical delineation is thus changed into a spiritual and mystic one. Botticelli groups four saints around the Virgin crowned in glory: an Apostle, a cardinal and two bishops. Fra Angelico and Pietro del Pollaiuolo were before him in this. The grand vision that had thrown the Apostles into astonishment and that shone in the souls of the saints and faithful, must at length cause the framework given in the Apocrypha to be forgotten, and even cause the witnesses of the drama to vanish. It is this vision, freed from every earthly tie and from every reminder of the Apocrypha, that art aspired to represent through painting and sculpture. This is the theme that Donatello was among the first, if not the first, to deal with on one of the sides of Cardinal Branacci's sarcophagus.⁴⁷ Titian took it up at Venice in his fresco for the Chapel of St. Zeno in the Church of the Crusaders. Mary, surrounded by angels and with arms extended and eyes opened widely on the Uncreated Glory, rises towards God in irresistible flight. Guido Reni, Pacheco, Nicolas Poussin and Philippe de Champaigne will do nothing more than exploit the master idea of the Venetian painter in their own manner. What we always see is Mary, either borne up by angels or lifting herself with spontaneous motion, but freed from every reminder of earth, mounting upwards in the serenity of space.

We have met with two formulas at the beginnings of the representation of the Assumption, one western, the other Syrian. The first is free from any influence of the Apocrypha, the second is inspired by it. But in *their expression* both of them, it seems, are linked up with the two descriptions of Our Lord's Ascension suggested by the words of the Acts and the Gospel according to St. Luke.

The western formula would scarcely favor a true work of art that

could satisfy both esthetics and piety. One lasting element, however, ought to be noted. For a long time the Virgin keeps her attitude of prayer. Sometimes also in the Ottonian miniatures we see the hand of God come forth from heaven to welcome or crown Mary. But important as these details may be, the formula itself did not develop. It remained sterile. On the other hand a long life was reserved for the Syrian conception. We have seen it assert itself from the seventh or eighth century, and without doubt we ought to deplore the disappearance of other works. To it the miniaturists of the eleventh and twelfth recur, though awkwardly, to transform the Byzantine Falling Asleep into an Assumption.

The awakening of the Virgin sleeping in death, the scrutiny of the tomb emptied of its treasure, the cincture of the Virgin bestowed upon the Apostle Thomas as a proof or pledge of the resurrection and Assumption of the Mother of God, are three western episodes which through the art of the Middle Ages recall the apocryphal narratives. They do not modify, however, the representation of the Assumption itself: Mary enclosed in an immense almond-shaped nimbus, as in a rigid frame, remains always entrusted to the angels charged with carrying her to heaven. Artistic sense, as well as theological ideas, will cause this crude enclosure to disappear gradually, and will create for the glorified Mother of God that charming retinue of little angels who are bathed in her glory. The work of Titian collects and orchestrates the successive gains. Baroque art, working according to the spirit by which it lives, will set itself to impress on Mary as she mounts to heaven a flight more spontaneous, more vehement, more dizzying.

Finally, leaving aside the frame inside which the Assumption unfolds, for it is still too heavy, religious art creates a purified representation—as it had done for the Immaculate Conception—in which we see only Mary, in the splendor of refound life and transfigured by glory, mount towards the throne of God with the escort of angels, or carried by them, there to be crowned Queen and sovereign of the world.

¹ Cf. the bibliography of Marian art at the beginning of our article "Le visage de Marie à travers les siècles, dans l'art religieux," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, mai-juin 1946, p. 282. Also K. Kunstle, "Tod und Verherrlichung Marias," *Ikongraphie der Christlichen Kunst*, Freiburg, 1928, t. 1, pp. 563-583; J. Helbig, "La mort et la resurrection de la Sainte

Vierge," *Revue de l'art Chétien*, t. 37, 1894, p. 367ss.; C. Jeglot, *La vie de la Vierge dans l'art*, Paris, 1927; E. Male, *L'art religieux du XIII^e siècle en France*, Paris, 1906, p. 248ss.

² Acts. 1:11.

³ Psalm 17:17.

⁴ Cf. Le Blant, *Sarcophages d'Arles*, plate XXXIII, no. 2. Also H. Leclercq, "Ascension," DACL, t. I, col. 2928, fig. 987.

⁵ Leclercq, *loc. cit.*, col. 2929, fig. 988.

⁶ Leclercq, "Assomption," *loc. cit.*, col. 2991, fig. 1026.

⁷ Cf. Garrucci, *Storia dell'arte cristiana*, plate 178, no. 7.

⁸ Cf. Leclercq, "Pierre," DACL, t. XIII, col. 939, fig. 10220.

⁹ *Loc. cit.*, col. 944, fig. 10226.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, fig. 10227.

¹¹ Cf. G. Llopart, "Los origenes de la creencia y de la fiesta de la Asunción in España," *Estudios Marianos*, t. vi, 1947, p. 155ss.

¹² Luke 24:51.

¹³ Leclercq, "Ascension," DACL, t. I, col. 2927, fig. 985.

¹⁴ *Loc. cit.*, plate inserted in the text.

¹⁵ Leclercq, "Ampoules," DACL, t. I, fig. 458-460.

¹⁶ Cf. pseudo-Melito, *Transitus*, C. XVIII. See also James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, p. 216, and p. 196 where it is told that a variant of the Coptic narrative had already reported thus: "And Peter and John and all of us looked on while she was carried to heaven until she was lost from view."

¹⁷ Cf. *Revue de l'art Chrétien*, IV^e série, t. VIII, 1897, p. 227ss.; Leclercq, "Assomption," DACL, t. I, col. 2984, fig. 1022.

¹⁸ Cf. *Liber Pontificalis*, edit. Mgr. Duchesne, t. I, p. 500.

¹⁹ *Op cit.*, t. II, p. 61.

²⁰ Cf. A. Michel, *Histoire de l'art*, t. I, part II, p. 389, S. Beissel, *Geschichte der Verehrung Marias während des Mittelalters in Deutschland*, p. 89, fig. 35.

²¹ Cf. pseudo-Melito, *De transitu V. Mariae*, c. IX, PG, 5, 1235.

²² Cf. John of Thessalonica, "Dormitio Dominae nostrae," PO, t. 19, p. 396.

²³ Cf. Voge, *Malerschule*, p. 8 & 12, note 2.

²⁴ Cf. Beissel, *Geschichte der Verehrung...*, p. 194, fig. 91.

²⁵ Cf. *Zeitschrift f. christliche Kunst*, t. III, 1890, p. 143ss.

²⁶ Cf. Beissel, *loc. cit.*, p. 193s.

²⁷ Cf. I. F. Robinson, "Boharic Accounts of the Falling Asleep of Mary with Saidic Fragments," *Texts and Studies*, t. IV, no. 2, p. 65, Cambridge, 1896.

²⁸ Cf. pseudo-Melito, *De transitu...*, cc. XVI-X III, PG, 5, 1238s. In the *Golden Legend* Jacopo de Voragine reproduces exactly the text of

the pseudo-Melito under August 15. See the translation by Th. de Wyzewa, Paris, 1911, p. 434s.

²⁹ Cf. E. Male, *L'art religieux du XIII^e siècle...*, p. 246, fig. 124 and p. 254s. Also *Notre-Dame de Paris*, edit. "Tel," plates 23 & 24.

³⁰ Cf. E. Male, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

³¹ Cf. M. Jugie, "Le récit de l'histoire euthymiaque. . .," *Echos d'Orient*, t. XXV, 1926, pp. 385-392.

³² This narrative is attributed to Joseph of Arimathea. Cf. James, *op. cit.*, p. 317s. Also Kunstle, *Ikongraphie...*, t. I, p. 583.

³³ Emile Male points out a miniature of the thirteenth century, copied by the Comte de Bastard, which treats our subject. Cf. p. 356.

³⁴ Cf. K. Kunstle, *op. cit.*, t. I, p. 582, no. 327.

³⁵ Cf. F. A. Gruyer, *Les Vierges de Raphael*, t. II, Paris, 1869, p. 563ss.

³⁶ For the engraving of Dürer see Kunstle, *op. cit.*, t. I, p. 576, no. 323.

³⁷ A beautiful reproduction of Orcagna's work is found in Kunstle, *loc. cit.*, no. 329.

³⁸ The Assumption of the chevet of Notre Dame in Paris is reproduced in *Notre-Dame de Paris*, edit. "Tel" fig. 11 (fourteenth century), and in E. Male, *op. cit.*, p. 247, fig. 125.

³⁹ Cf. A. Michel, *Hist. de l'art*, t. II, part II, p. 648 (end of the fifteenth century).

⁴⁰ At Magdeburg the sculptor has had the bad taste to place the Virgin, framed in the oval nimbus, on a litter covered with draperies, which two angels carry. Cf. A. Michel, *op. cit.*, t. II, part II, p. 752.

⁴¹ For Donatello's work see Michel, *op. cit.*, t. III, part II, p. 565.

⁴² Cf. Laforge, *La Sainte Vierge*, p. 272, and Rothés, *Die Madonna*, 2nd edition, fig. 160.

⁴³ It is quite exceptional that Albert Bouts (obit 1549) represents Mary as carried towards the Father by the other two persons of the Trinity. His picture, a triptych, is in the Brussels Museum.

⁴⁴ Cf. F. X. Kraus, *Geschichte der christlichen Kunst*, t. II, part II, p. 739s. See also Newnes' Art Library, "The Early Work of Titian," plates 50-53, London.

⁴⁵ Cf. Beissel, *op. cit.*, pp. 379-382.

⁴⁶ The Assumption was one of the religious subjects that responded best to an artistic genius drunk with life, light and space. Among the most successful works we cite the Assumptions of the Cathedral of Antwerp, the Brussels Museum, the Lichtenstein Gallery (Vienna) and the Colonna Gallery (Rome).

⁴⁷ Cf. Michel, *op. cit.*, t. III, part II, p. 564.

ON THE FALLING ASLEEP OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

by

ST. JOHN DAMASCENE

ST. JOHN DAMASCENE, the last of the Greek Fathers, was born at Damascus, the capital of Syria, about 675, and died probably in 749. Pope Leo XIII proclaimed him a Doctor of the Church, fixing his feast on March 27.

St. John's importance in Greek theology is universally acknowledged and his authority is accepted by both the Catholic and Orthodox Eastern Churches. "In every attempt to bring about union between Rome and the East," writes Rev. Paul F. Palmer, S.J., in *Mary in the Documents of the Church*, "the teaching of Damascene has served as a point of agreement; and should reunion eventually come, St. John Damascene and the Lady of whom he sings will play an important part, subordinate only to that of Christ, the mediator *par excellence*."

The three homilies on the Assumption which follow were delivered by St. John Damascene before the same audience on the same day. They have earned for him the title "Doctor of the Assumption."

ON THE FALLING ASLEEP OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

SERMON I

by

ST. JOHN DAMASCENE

O HOW does the source of life pass through death to life? **O** how can she obey the law of nature, who, in conceiving, surpasses the boundaries of nature? How is her spotless body made subject to death? In order to be clothed with immortality she must first put off mortality, since the Lord of nature did not reject the penalty of death. She dies according to the flesh, destroys death by death, and through corruption gains incorruption, and makes her death the source of resurrection. **O** how does Almighty God receive with His own hands the holy disembodied soul of Our Lord's Mother! He honors her truly, whom being His servant by nature, He made His Mother, in His inscrutable abyss of mercy, when He became incarnate in very truth. We may well believe that the angelic choirs waited to receive thy departing soul. **O** what a blessed departure this going to God of thine. If God vouchsafes it to all His servants—and we know that He does—what an immense difference there is between His servants and His Mother. What, then, shall we call this mystery of thine? Death? Thy blessed soul is naturally parted from thy blissful and undefiled body, and thy body is delivered to the grave, yet it does not endure in death, nor is it the prey of corruption. The body of her, whose virginity remained unspotted in childbirth, was preserved in its incorruption, and was taken to a better, diviner place, where death is not, but eternal life. Just as the glorious sun may be hidden momentarily by the opaque moon, it shows still though covered, and its rays illumine the darkness since light belongs to its essence. It has in itself a perpetual source of light, or rather it is the source of light as God created it. So art thou the perennial source of true light, the

treasury of life itself, the richness of grace, the cause and medium of all our goods. And if for a time thou art hidden by the death of the body, without speaking, thou art our light, life-giving ambrosia, true happiness, a sea of grace, a fountain of healing and of perpetual blessing. Thou art as a fruitful tree in the forest, and thy fruit is sweet in the mouth of the faithful. Therefore I will not call thy sacred transformation death, but rest or going home, and it is more truly a going home. Putting off corporeal things, thou dwellest in a happier state.

Angels with archangels bear thee up. Impure spirits trembled at thy departure. The air raises a hymn of praise at thy passage, and the atmosphere is purified. Heaven receives thy soul with joy. The heavenly powers greet thee with sacred canticles and with joyous praise, saying: "Who is this most pure creature ascending, shining as the dawn, beautiful as the moon, conspicuous as the sun? How sweet and lovely thou art, the lily of the field, the rose among thorns; therefore thy young maidens loved thee." We are drawn after the odor of thy ointments. The King introduces thee into His chamber. There Powers protect thee, Principalities praise thee, Thrones proclaim thee, Cherubim are hushed in joy, and Seraphim magnify the true Mother by nature and by grace of their very Lord. Thou wert not taken into heaven as Elias was, nor didst thou penetrate to the third heaven with Paul, but thou didst reach the royal throne itself of thy Son, seeing it with thy own eyes, standing by it in joy and unspeakable familiarity. O gladness of angels and of all heavenly powers, sweetness of patriarchs and of the just, perpetual exultation of prophets, rejoicing the world and sanctifying all things, refreshment of the weary, comfort of the sorrowful, remission of sins, health of the sick, harbor of the storm-tossed, lasting strength of mourners, and perpetual succor of all who invoke thee.

O wonder surpassing nature and creating wonder! Death, which of old was feared and hated, is a matter of praise and blessing. Of old it was the harbinger of grief, dejection, tears, and sadness, and now it is shown forth as the cause of joy and rejoicing. In the case of all God's servants, whose death is extolled, His good pleasure is surmised from their holy end, and therefore their death is blessed. It shows them to be perfect, blessed and immovable in goodness, as the proverb says: "Praise no man before his death." This, however, we do not apply to thee. Thy

blessedness was not death, nor was dying thy perfection, nor, again, did thy departure hence help thee to security. Thou art the beginning, middle, and end of all goods transcending mind, for thy Son in His conception and divine dwelling in thee is made our sure and true security.

Thus thy words were true: from the moment of His conception, not from thy death, thou didst say all generations should call thee blessed. It was thou who didst break the force of death, paying its penalty, and making it gracious. Hence, when thy holy and sinless body was taken to the tomb, the choirs of angels bore it, and were all around, leaving nothing undone for the honor of Our Lord's Mother, while apostles and all the assembly of the Church burst into prophetic song, saying: "We shall be filled with the good things of Thy house, holy is Thy temple, wonderful in justice." And again: "The Most High has sanctified His tabernacle. The mountain of God is a fertile mountain, the mountain in which it pleased God to dwell." The apostolic band lifting the true ark of the Lord God on their shoulders, as the priest of old the typical ark, and placing thy body in the tomb, made it, as if another Jordan, the way to the true land of the gospel, the heavenly Jerusalem, the mother of all the faithful, God being its Lord and architect. Thy soul did not descend to Limbo, neither did thy flesh see corruption. Thy pure and spotless body was not left in the earth, but the abode of the Queen, of God's true Mother, was fixed in the heavenly kingdom alone.

O how did heaven receive her who is greater than heaven? How did she, who had received God, descend into the grave? This truly happened, and she was held by the tomb. It was not after bodily wise that she surpassed heaven. For how can a body measuring three cubits, and continually losing flesh, be compared with the dimensions of heaven? It was rather by grace that she surpassed all height and depth, for that which is divine is incomparable. O sacred and wonderful, holy and worshipful body, ministered to now by angels, standing by in lowly reverence. Demons tremble: men approach with faith, honoring and worshipping her, greeting her with eyes and lips, and drawing down upon themselves abundant blessings. Just as the rich scent sprinkled upon clothes or places, leaves its fragrance even after it has been withdrawn, so now that holy, undefiled, and sacred body, filled with heavenly fragrance, the rich source of grace, is laid in the tomb that it may be translated to

a higher and better place. Nor did she leave the grave empty; her body imparted to it a divine fragrance, a source of healing, and of all good for those who approach it with faith.

We, too, approach thee today, O Queen; and again, I say, O Queen, O Virgin Mother of God, staying our souls with our trust in thee, as with a strong anchor. Lifting up mind, soul and body, and all ourselves to thee, rejoicing in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, we reach through thee One who is beyond our reach on account of His Majesty. If, as the divine Word made flesh taught us, honor shown to His servants is honor shown Our Lord, how can honor shown to thee, His Mother, be slighted? How is it not most desirable? Art thou not honored as the very breath of life? Thus shall we best show our service to Our Lord Himself. What do I say to Our Lord? It is sufficient that those who think of Thee should recall the memory of Thy most precious gift as the cause of our lasting joy. How it fills us with gladness! How the mind that dwells on this holy treasury of Thy grace enriches itself.

This is our thank-offering to thee, the first fruits of our discourses, the best homage of my poor mind, whilst I am moved by desire of thee, and full of my own misery. But do thou graciously receive my desire, knowing that it exceeds my power. Watch over us, O Queen, the dwelling-place of Our Lord. Lead and govern all our ways as thou wilt. Save us from our sins. Lead us into the calm harbor of the divine will. Make us worthy of future happiness through the sweet and face-to-face vision of the Word made flesh through thee. With Him, glory, praise, power, and majesty be to the Father and to the holy and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON II
by
ST. JOHN DAMASCENE

THERE IS no one in existence who is able to praise worthily the holy death of God's Mother, even if he should have a thousand tongues and a thousand mouths. Not if all the most eloquent tongues could be united would their praises be sufficient. She is greater than all praise. Since, however, God is pleased with the efforts of loving zeal,

and the Mother of God with what concerns the service of her Son, suffer me now to revert again to her praises. This is in obedience to your orders, most excellent pastors, so dear to God, and we call upon the Word made flesh of her to come to our assistance. He gives speech to every mouth which is opened for Him. He is her sole pleasure and adornment. We know that in celebrating her praises we pay off our debt, and that in so doing we are again debtors, so that the debt is ever beginning afresh.

It is fitting that we should exalt her who is above all created things, governing them as Mother of the God who is their Creator, Lord, and Master. Bear with me you who hang upon the divine words, and receive my good will. Strengthen my desire, and be patient with the weakness of my words. It is as if a man were to bring a violet of royal purple out of season, or a fragrant rose with buds of different hues, or some rich fruit of autumn to a mighty potentate who is divinely appointed to rule over men. Every day he sits at a table laden with every conceivable dish in the perfumed courts of his palace. He does not look at the smallness of the offering, or at its novelty so much as he admires the good intention, and with reason. This he would reward with an abundance of gifts and favors. So we, in our winter of poverty, bring garlands to our Queen, and prepare a flower of oratory for the feast of praise. We break our mind's stony desire with iron, pressing, as it were, the unripe grapes. And may you receive with more and more favor the words which fall upon your eager and listening ears.

What shall we offer the Mother of the Word if not our words? Like rejoices in like and in what it loves. Thus, then, making a start and loosening the reins of my discourse, I may send it forth as a charger ready equipped for the race. But do Thou, O Word of God, be my helper and auxiliary, and speak wisdom to my unwisdom. By Thy word make my path clear, and direct my course according to Thy good pleasure, which is the end of all wisdom and discernment.

Today the spotless Virgin, untouched by earthly affections, and all heavenly in her thoughts, was not dissolved in earth, but truly entering heaven, dwells in the heavenly tabernacles. Who would be wrong to call her heaven, unless indeed he truly said that she is greater than heaven in surpassing dignity? The Lord and Creator of heaven, the Architect of all things beneath the earth and above, of creation, visible and invisible,

Who is not circumvented by place (if that which surrounds things is rightly termed place), created Himself, without human cooperation, an Infant in her. He made her a rich treasure-house of His all pervading and alone uncircumscribed Godhead, subsisting entirely in her universality and Himself uncircumscribed.

Today the lifegiving treasury and abyss of charity (I know not how to trust my lips to speak of it) is hidden in immortal death. She meets it without fear, who conceived death's destroyer, if indeed we may call her holy and vivifying departure by the name of death. For how could she, who brought life to all, be under the dominion of death? But she obeys the law of her own Son, and inherits this chastisement as a daughter of the first Adam, since her Son, who is the life, did not refuse it. As the Mother of the living God, She goes through death to Him. For if God said: "Unless the first man put out his hand to take and taste of the tree of life, he shall not live for ever," how shall she, who received the Life Himself, without beginning or end, or finite vicissitudes, not live for ever.

Of old the Lord God banished from the garden of Eden our first parents after their disobedience, when they had dulled the eye of their heart through their sin, and weakened their mind's discernment, and had fallen into death-like apathy. But, now, shall not paradise receive her, who broke the bondage of all passion, sowed the seed of obedience to God and the Father, and was the beginning of life to the whole human race? Will not heaven open its gates to her with rejoicing? Yes, indeed. Eve listened to the serpent, adopted his suggestion, was caught by the lure of false and deceptive pleasure, and was condemned to pain and sorrow, and to bear children in suffering. With Adam she received the sentence of death, and was placed in the recesses of Limbo. How can death claim as its prey this truly blessed one, who listened to God's word in humility, and was filled with the Spirit, conceiving the Father's gift through the archangel, bearing without concupiscence or the cooperation of man the Person of the Divine Word, who fills all things, bringing Him forth without the pains of childbirth, being wholly united to God? How can Limbo open its gates to her? How could corruption touch the life-giving body?

These are things quite foreign to the soul and body of God's Mother.

Death trembled before her. In approaching her Son, death had learned experience from His sufferings, and had grown wiser. The gloomy descent to hell was not for her, but a joyous, easy, and sweet passage to heaven. If, as Christ, the Life and the Truth says: "Wherever I am, there is also my minister," how much more shall not His mother be with Him? She brought Him forth without pain, and her death, also, was painless. The death of sinners is terrible, for in it, sin, the cause of death, is sacrificed. What shall we say of her if not that she is the beginning of perpetual life. Precious indeed is the death of His saints to the Lord God of powers. More than precious is the passing away of God's Mother. Now let the heavens and the angels rejoice: let the earth and men be full of gladness. Let the air resound with song and canticle, and dark night put off its gloom, and emulate the brightness of day through the scintillating stars. The living city of the Lord God is assumed from God's temple, the visible Sion, and kings bring forth His most precious gift, their mother, to the heavenly Jerusalem—that is to say, the Apostles constituted princes by Christ, over all the earth, accompany the ever virginal Mother of God.

It does not seem superfluous to me to bring forward and insist on the past types of this holy one, the Mother of God. These types succinctly announced the Divine Child whom we have received. I look upon His Mother as the saint of saints, the holiest of all, the fragrant urn for the manna, or rather, to speak more truly, the fountain taking its rise in the divine and far-famed city of David, in Sion the glorious; in it the law is fulfilled and the spiritual law is portrayed. In Sion, Christ the Law-giver consummated the typical pasch, and God, the Author of the old and the new dispensation, gave us the true Pasch. In it the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, initiated His disciples unto His mystical feast, and gave them Himself slain as a victim, and the grape pressed in the true vine. In Sion, Christ is seen by His Apostles, risen from the dead, and Thomas is told, and through Thomas the world, that He is Lord and God, having in Himself two natures after His resurrection, and consequently two operations, independent wills, enduring for all ages. Sion is the crown of churches, the resting-place of disciples. In it the echo of the Holy Spirit, the gift of tongues, His fiery descent are transmitted to the Apostles. In it St. John, taking the Mother of God, minis-

tered to her wants. Sion is the mother of churches in the whole world, who offered a resting-place to the Mother of God after her Son's resurrection from the dead. In it, lastly, the Blessed Virgin was stretched on a small bed.

Eye-witnesses and ministers of the word were there, duly ministering to His Mother, and drawing from her a rich inheritance, as it were, and a full measure of praise. For is it a matter of doubt to any one that she is the source of blessing and the fountain of all good? Their followers and successors also were there, joining in their ministry and in their praise. A common labor produces common fruits. A chosen band from Jerusalem was there. It was fitting that the foremost men and prophets of the old law, they who had foretold God the Word's saving birth of her in time, should be there as a guard of honor. Nor did the angelic choirs fail. They who obeyed the king heartily, and consequently were honored by standing near Him, had the right to serve as a body-guard to His Mother, according to the flesh, the truly blessed and blissful one, surpassing all generations and all creation. All those were with her who are the brightness and the shining of the spirit, with spiritual eyes fixed upon her in reverence, and fear, and pure desire. We hear divine and inspired words, and spiritual canticles appropriate to the parting hour.

Then Adam and Eve, our first parents, opened their lips to exclaim, "Thou blessed daughter of ours, who removed the penalty of our disobedience! Thou, inheriting from us a mortal body, hast won us immortality. Thou, taking thy being from us, hast given us back the being in grace. Thou hast conquered pain and loosened the bondage of death. Thou hast restored us to our former state. We had shut the door of paradise; thou didst find entrance to the tree of life. Through us sorrow came out of good; through thee good from sorrow. How canst thou who art all fair taste of death? Thou art the gate of life and the ladder to heaven. Death is become the passage to immortality. O thou truly blessed one! Who that is not the Word could have borne what thou hast borne?"

All the company of the saints exclaimed, "Thou hast fulfilled our predictions. Thou hast purchased our present joy for us. Through thee we have broken the chains of death. Come to us, divine and life-giving receptacle. Come, our desire, thou who hast gained us our desire."

And the saints standing by added their no less burning words: "Remain with us, our comfort, our sole joy in this world. O Mother, leave us not orphans who have suffered on thy Son's account. May we have thee as a refuge and refreshment in our labors and weariness. Thou canst remain if thou so willest, even as thou canst depart hence. If thou departest, O dwelling-place of God, let us go too, if we are thine through thy Son. Thou art our sole consolation on earth. We live as long as thou livest, and it is bliss to die with thee. Why do we speak of death? Death is life to thee, and better than life—incomparably exceeding this life. How is our life—life, if we are deprived of thee?"

The Apostles and all the assembly of the Church may well have addressed some such words to the Blessed Virgin. When they saw the Mother of God near her end and longing for it, they were moved by divine grace to sing farewell hymns, and wrapt out of the flesh, they sighed to accompany the dying Mother of God, and anticipated death through intensity of will. When they had all satisfied their duty of loving reverence and had woven her a rich crown of hymns, they spoke a parting blessing over her, as a God-given treasure, and the last words. These, I should think, were significant of this life's fleetingness, and of its leading to the hidden mysteries of future goods.

This, it appears to me, is what they did at once and unanimously. The King was there to receive with divine embrace the holy, undefiled, and stainless soul of His Mother on her going home, and she, as we may well conjecture, said, "Into Thy hands, O my Son, I commend my spirit. Receive my soul, dear to Thee, which Thou didst keep spotless. I give my body to Thee, not to the earth. Guard that which Thou wert pleased to inhabit and to preserve in virginity. Take me to Thyself, that wherever Thou art, the fruit of my womb, there I too may be. I am impelled to Thee who didst descend to me. Do Thou be the consolation of my most cherished children, whom Thou didst vouchsafe to call Thy brethren, when my death leaves them in loneliness. Bless them afresh through my hands." Then stretching out her hands, as we may believe, she blessed all those present, and then she heard the words: "Come, my beloved Mother, to thy rest. Arise and come, most dear amongst women, the winter is past and gone, the harvest time is at hand. Thou art all fair, my beloved, and there is no stain in thee. Thy fragrance is sweeter than

all ointment." With these words in her ear, that holy one gave up her spirit into the hands of her Son.

What happens? Nature, I conjecture, is stirred to its depths, strange sounds and voices are heard, and the swelling hymns of angels who precede, accompany, and follow her. Some constitute the guard of honor to that undefiled and immaculate soul on its way to heaven until the queen reaches the divine throne. Others surrounding the sacred and divine body proclaim God's Mother in angelic harmony. What of those who watched by the most holy and immaculate? In loving reverence and with tears of joy they gathered round the blessed and divine tabernacle, embracing every member, and were filled with holiness and thanksgiving. Then illnesses were cured, and demons were put to flight and banished to the regions of darkness. The air and atmosphere and heavens were sanctified by her passage through them, the earth by the burial of her body. Nor was water deprived of a blessing. She was washed in pure water. It did not cleanse her, but was rather itself sanctified. Then, hearing was given to the deaf, the lame recovered their feet, and the blind their sight. Sinners who approached with faith blotted out the handwriting against them. Then the holy body is wrapped in a snow-white winding-sheet, and the queen is again laid upon her bed. Then follow lights and incense and hymns, and angels singing as befits the solemnity; Apostles and patriarchs acclaiming her in inspired song.

When the Ark of God, departing from Mount Sion for the heavenly country, was borne on the shoulders of the Apostles, it was placed on the way in the tomb. First it was taken through the city, as a bride dazzling with spiritual radiance, and then carried to the sacred place of Gethsemane, angels overshadowing it with their wings, going before, accompanying, and following it, together with the whole assembly of the Church. King Solomon compelled all the elders of Israel in Sion to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord from the city of David, that is Sion, to rest in the temple of the Lord, which he had built, and the priests took the ark and the tabernacle of the testimony, and the priests and levites raised it. And the king and all the people sacrificed numberless oxen and sheep before the ark. And the priests carried the ark of the testimony of God into its place, into the Holy of Holies, beneath the wings of the cherubim. So it is now with the dwelling-place of the true

ark, no longer of the testimony, but the very substance of God the Word. The new Solomon, the Prince of peace, the Creator of all things in the heavens and on the earth, assembled together today the supporters of the new covenant, that is the Apostles, with all the people of the saints in Jerusalem, brought in her soul through angels to the true Holy of Holies, under the wings of the four living creatures, and set her on His throne within the veil, where Christ Himself had preceded her. Her body the while is borne by the Apostles' hands, the King of Kings covering her with the splendor of His invisible Godhead, the whole assembly of the saints preceding her, with sacred song and sacrifice of praise until through the tomb it was placed in the delights of Eden, the heavenly tabernacles.

Then they reached the most sacred Gethsemane, and once more there were embracings and prayers and panegyrics, hymns and tears, poured forth by sorrowful and loving hearts. They mingled a flood of weeping and sweating. And thus the immaculate body was laid in the tomb. Then it was assumed after three days to the heavenly mansions. The bosom of the earth was no fitting receptacle for the Lord's dwelling-place, the living source of cleansing water, the wheat of heavenly bread, the sacred vine of divine wine, the evergreen and fruitful olive-branch of God's mercy. And just as the all-holy body of God's Son, which was taken from her, rose from the dead on the third day, it followed that she should be snatched from the tomb, that the Mother should be united to her Son; and as He had come down to her, so she should be raised up to Him, into the more perfect dwelling-place, heaven itself. It was meet that she, who had sheltered God the Word in her own womb, should inhabit the tabernacles of her Son. And as our Lord said it behooved Him to be concerned with His Father's business, so it behooved His Mother that she should dwell in the courts of her Son, in the house of the Lord, and in the courts of the house of our God.

If all those who rejoice dwell in Him, where must the cause itself of joy abide? It was fitting that the body of her, who preserved her virginity unsullied in her motherhood, should be kept from corruption even after death. She who nursed her Creator as an infant at her breast, had a right to be in the divine tabernacles. The place of the bride whom the Father had espoused, was in the heavenly courts. It was fitting that she who

saw her Son die on the cross, and received in her heart the sword of pain which she had not felt in childbirth, should gaze upon Him seated next to the Father. The Mother of God had a right to the possession of her Son, and as handmaid and Mother of God, to the worship of all creation. The inheritance of the parents ever passes to the children. Now, as a wise man said, the sources of sacred waters are above. The Son made all creation serve His Mother.

Let us then also keep solemn feast today to honor the joyful departure of God's Mother, not with flutes nor corybants, nor the orgies of Cybele, the mother of false gods, as they say, whom foolish people talk of as a fruitful mother of children, and in truth is no mother at all. These are demons and false imaginings. They usurp what they are not by nature to impose upon human folly. For how can what is bodiless lead the wedded life? How can that be God which, not being before, is present only after birth? That devils were bodiless is apparent to all, even to those who are intellectually blind. Homer somewhere testifies to the condition of the gods he honors:

They eat not barley, and drink not ruddy wine,
So they are bloodless and are called immortal.

They eat not bread, he says, neither do they drink fiery wine. On this account they are anemic, that is, without blood, and are called immortals. He truly and appropriately says, "are called." They are called immortals. They are not that which they are called. They died the death of wickedness. Now we worship God, not God beginning His being, but who always was and is above all cause and argument or created mind or nature. We honor and reverence the Mother of God, not ascribing to her the eternal generation of His Godhead. For the generation of God the Word was not in time, and was co-eternal with the Father. We acknowledge a second generation in His spontaneous taking of flesh, and we see and know the cause of this. He who is without beginning and without body takes flesh for us as one of ourselves. And taking flesh of this sacred Virgin, He is born without man, remaining Himself perfect God, and becoming perfect man, perfect God in His flesh, and perfect Man in His Godhead. Thus, recognizing God's Mother in this Virgin, we celebrate her falling asleep, not proclaiming her as God—far be from

us these heathen fables—since we are announcing her death, but recognizing her as the Mother of the Incarnate God.

O people of Christ, let us acclaim her today in sacred song, acknowledge our own good fortune and proclaim it. Let us honor her in nocturnal vigil; let us delight in her purity of soul and body, for she next to God surpasses all in purity. It is natural for similar things to glory in each other. Let us show our love for her by compassion and kindness towards the poor. For if mercy is the best worship of God, who will refuse to show His Mother devotion in the same way? She opened to us the unspeakable abyss of God's love for us. Through her the old enmity against the Creator is destroyed. Through her our reconciliation with Him is strengthened, peace and grace are given to us, men are the companions of angels, and we, who were in dishonor, are made the children of God. From her we have plucked the fruit of life. From her we have received the seed of immortality. She is the channel of all our goods. In her God was man and man was God. What more marvelous or more blessed? I approach the subject in fear and trembling. With Mary, the prophetess, O youthful souls, let us sound our members on earth, for this is spiritual music. Let our souls rejoice in the Ark of God, and the walls of Jericho will yield, I mean the fortresses of the enemy. Let us dance in spirit with David; today the Ark of God is at rest. With Gabriel, the great archangel, let us exclaim, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Hail, inexhaustible ocean of grace. Hail, sole refuge in grief. Hail, cure of hearts. Hail, through whom death is expelled and life is installed."

And you I will speak to as if living, most sacred of tombs, after the life-giving tomb of our Lord, which is the source of the resurrection. Where is the pure gold which apostolic hands confided to you? Where is the inexhaustible treasure? Where the precious receptacle of God? Where is the living table? Where the new book in which the incomprehensible Word of God is written without hands? Where is the abyss of grace and the ocean of healing? Where is the lifegiving fountain? Where is the sweet and loved body of God's Mother?

Why do you seek in the tomb one who has been assumed to the heavenly courts? Why do you make me responsible for not keeping her? I was powerless to go against the divine commands. That sacred and holy body, leaving the winding-sheet behind, filled me full of sweet fragrance,

sanctified me by its contact, and fulfilled the divine scheme, and was then assumed, angels and archangels and all the heavenly powers escorting it. Now angels surround me, and divine grace abounds in me. I am the physician of the sick. I am a perpetual source of health, and the terror of demons. I am a city of refuge for fugitives. Approach with faith and you will receive a sea of graces. Come, you of weak faith. All you that thirst, come to the waters in obedience to Isaias' commands, and you who have no money, come and buy for nothing. I call upon you all with the Gospel invitation. Let him who longs for bodily or spiritual cure, forgiveness of sins, deliverance from misfortune, the possession of heaven, approach me with faith, and draw hence a strong and rich stream of grace. Just as the action of one and the same water acts differently on the earth, air, and sun, according to the nature of each, producing wine in the vine and oil in the olive-tree, so does one and the same grace profit each person according to his needs. I do not possess grace on my own account. A tomb given up to corruption, an object of sorrow and dejection, I receive a precious ointment, and am impregnated with it, and this sweet fragrance alters my condition whilst it lasts. Truly, divine graces flow where they will. I have sheltered the source of joy, and I have become rich in its perennial fountain.

What shall we answer the tomb? You have indeed rich and abiding grace, but divine power is not restricted by place, neither is the Mother of God's working. If it were confined to the tomb alone, few would be the richer. Now it is freely distributed in all parts of the world. Let us then make our memory serve as a storehouse of God's Mother. How shall this be? She is a virgin and a lover of virginity. She is pure and a lover of purity. If we purify our mind with the body, we shall possess her grace. She shuns all impurity and impure passions. She has a horror of intemperance, and a special hatred for fornication. She turns from its allurements as from the progeny of serpents. . . . She looks upon all sin as death-inflicting, rejoicing in all good. Contraries are cured by contraries. She delights in fasting and continence and spiritual canticles, in purity, virginity, and wisdom.

With these she is ever at peace, and takes them to her heart. She embraces peace and a meek spirit, and love, mercy, and humility as her children. In a word, she grieves over every sin, and is glad at all good-

ness as if it were her own. If we turn away from our former sins in all earnestness and love goodness with all our hearts, and make it our constant companion, she will frequently visit her servants, bringing all blessings with her, Christ her Son, the King, and Lord who reigns in our hearts. To Him be glory, praise, honor, power, and magnificence, with the eternal Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

SERMON III

by

ST. JOHN DAMASCENE

LOVERS ARE wont to speak of what they love, and to let their fancy run on it by day and night. Let no one therefore blame me, if I add a third tribute to the Mother of God, on her triumphant departure. I am not profiting her, but myself and you who are here present, putting before you a spiritual seasoning and refreshment in keeping with this holy night. We are suffering, as you see, from scarcity of eatables. Therefore I am extemporizing a repast, which, if not very costly nor worthy of the occasion, will certainly be sufficient to still hunger. She does not need our praise. It is we who need her glory. How indeed can glory be glorified, or the source of light be enlightened? We are weaving a crown for ourselves in the doing. "I live," the Lord says, "and I will glorify those who glorify Me."

Wine is truly pleasant to drink, and bread to eat. The one rejoices, the other strengthens the heart of man. But what is sweeter than the Mother of my God? She has taken my mind captive, and held my tongue in bondage. I think of her by day and night. She, the Mother of the Word, supplies my words. The fruit of sterility makes sterile minds fruitful. We keep today the feast of her blessed and divine transit from this world. Let us then climb up the mystical mountain, where beyond the reach of worldly things, passing through the obscurity of storm, we stand in the divine light and may give praise to Almighty power. How does He, who dwells in the splendor of His glory, descend into the Virgin's womb without leaving the bosom of the Father? How is He conceived in the flesh, and does He spontaneously suffer, and suffer unto death, in that

material body, gaining immortality through corruptibility? And, again, ascending in the flesh, to His own Father, assuming into the heavenly country her who was heaven on earth.

Today the living ladder, through whom the Most High descended and was seen on earth, and conversed with men, was assumed into heaven by death. Today the heavenly table, she, who contained the bread of life, the fire of the Godhead, without knowing man, was assumed from earth to heaven, and the gates of heaven opened wide to receive the gate of God from the East. Today the living city of God is transferred from the earthly to the heavenly Jerusalem, and she, who, conceived her first-born and only Son, the first-born of all creation, the only begotten of the Father, rests in the Church of the first-born: the true and living Ark of the Lord is taken to the peace of her Son. The gates of heaven are opened to receive the receptacle of God, who, bringing forth the tree of life, destroyed Eve's disobedience and Adam's penalty of death. And Christ, the cause of all life, receives the chosen mirror, the mountain from which the stone without hands filled the whole earth. She, who brought about the Word's divine Incarnation, rests in her glorious tomb as in a bridal chamber, whence she goes to the heavenly bridals, to share in the kingdom of her Son and God, leaving her tomb as a place of rest for those on earth. Is her tomb indeed a resting-place? Yes, more famous than any other, not shining with gold, or silver, or precious stones, nor covered with silken, golden, or purple adornments, but with the divine radiance of the Holy Spirit.

The angelic state is not for lovers of this world, but the wondrous life of the blessed is for the servants of the Spirit, and passing to God is better and sweeter than any other life. This tomb is fairer than Eden. And that I may not speak of the enemy's deceit, in the one, of his, so to say, clever counsel, his envy and covetousness, of Eve's weakness and pliability, the bait, sure and tempting, which cheated her and her husband, their disobedience, exile, and death, not to speak of these things so as not to turn our feast into sorrow, *this* grave gave up the mortal body it contained to the heavenly country. Eve became the mother of the human family, and is not man made after the divine image, convicted by her condemnation: "Earth thou art, and unto earth thou shalt return"? This tomb is more precious than the tabernacle of old, receiving the real

and life-giving receptacle of the Lord, the heavenly table, not the loaves of proposition, but of heaven, not material fire, but her who contained the pure fire of the Godhead. This tomb is holier than the ark of Moses, blessed not with types and shadows, but the truth itself. It showed forth the pure and golden urn, containing the heavenly manna, the living tablet, receiving the Incarnate Word of God from the impress of the Holy Spirit, the golden censer of the supersubstantial word. It showed forth her who conceived the divine fire embalming all creation.

Let demons take to flight, and the thrice miserable Nestorians perish as the Egyptians of old, and their ruler Pharaoh, the younger, a cruel abyss of blasphemy. Let us who are saved with dry feet, crossing the bitter waters of impiety, raise our voices to the Mother of God at her departure. Let Mary, the sister of Moses, personifying the Church, lead the joyful strain. Let the maidens of the spiritual Jerusalem go out in singing choirs. Let kings and judges, with rulers, youths, and virgins, young and old, proclaim the Mother of God, and all people and nations in their different ways and tongues, sing a new canticle. Let the air resound with praise and instrument, and the sun gladden this day of salvation. Rejoice, O heavens, and may the clouds rain justice. Be glad, O divine Apostles, the chosen ones of God's flock, who seem to reach the highest visions, as lofty mountain tops, and you, God's sheep, and His holy people, the flock of the Church, who look to the high mountains of perfection, be sad, for the fountain of life, God's Mother, is dead. It was necessary that what was made of earth should return to earth, and thus be assumed to heaven. It was fitting that the earthly tenement should be cast off, as gold is purified, so that the flesh in death might become pure and immortal, and rise in shining immortality from the tomb.

Today she begins her second life through Him Who was the cause of her first being, to Whom she had given a beginning. I mean the life of the body. His divine existence, of course, has no beginning in time, although the Father is its principle. Rejoice, holy and divine mountain, the new Bethel, in which a pillar was anointed, namely human nature anointed throughout with the Godhead. From thee her Son ascended to the heavenly heights, as though borne aloft from the olives. Let the world-embracing cloud be prepared and the winds gather the Apostles to Mount Sion from the ends of the earth. Who are these who soar up as

clouds and eagles to the cause of all resurrection, ministering to the Mother of God? Who is she who rises resplendent, all pure, and bright as the sun? Let the spiritual lyres sing to her, the apostolic tongues. Let grave theologians raise their voices in praise, Hierotheus, of the vessel of election, in whom the Holy Spirit abides, knowing and teaching divine things by the divine indwelling. Let them be wrapt out of the body and join willingly in the joyful hymn. Let all nations clap their hands and praise the Mother of God. Let angels minister to her body. Follow your Queen, O daughters of Jerusalem, and, together with her virgins in the spirit, approach your Bridegroom in order to sit at His right hand.

Make haste, Lord, to give Thy Mother the welcome which is her due. Stretch out Thy divine hands. Receive Thy Mother's soul into the Father's hands unto which Thou didst commend Thy spirit on the Cross. Speak sweet words to her: "Come, my beloved, whose purity is more dazzling than the sun, thou gavest me of thy own, receive now what is mine. Come, my Mother, to thy Son, reign with Him who was poor with thee." Depart, O Queen, depart, not as Moses did who went up to die. Die rather that thou mayest ascend. Give up thy soul into the hands of thy Son. Return earth to the earth, it will be no obstacle. Lift up your eyes, O people of God. See in Sion the Ark of the Lord God of powers, and the Apostles standing by it, burying the life-giving body which received our Lord. Invisible angels are all around in lowly reverence doing homage to the Mother of their Lord. The Lord Himself is there, who is present everywhere, and filling all things, the universal Being, not in place. He is the Author and Creator of all things. Behold the Virgin, the daughter of Adam and Mother of God; through Adam she gives her body to the earth, her soul to her Son above in the heavenly courts. Let the holy city be sanctified, and rejoice in eternal praise. Let angels precede the divine tabernacle on its passage, and prepare the tomb. Let the radiance of the spirit adorn it. Let sweet ointment be made ready and poured over the pure and undefiled body. Let a clear stream of grace flow from grace in its source. Let the earth be sanctified by contact with that body. Let the air rejoice at the Assumption. Let gentle breezes waft grace. Let all nature keep the feast of the Mother of God's Assumption. May youthful bands applaud and eloquent tongues acclaim her, and wise hearts ponder on the wonder, priests hoary with age gather strength at the sight. Let

all creation emulate heaven, even so the true measure of rejoicing would not be reached.

Come, let us depart with her. Come, let us descend to that tomb with all our heart's desire. Let us draw round that most sacred bed and sing the sweet words, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Hail, predestined Mother of God. Hail, thou chosen one in the design of God from all eternity, most sacred hope of earth, resting-place of divine fire, holiest delight of the Spirit, fountain of living water, paradise of the tree of life, divine vine-branch, bringing forth soul-sustaining nectar and ambrosia. Full river of spiritual graces, fertile land of the divine pastures, rose of purity, with the sweet fragrance of grace, lily of the royal robe, pure Mother of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, token of our redemption, handmaid and Mother, surpassing angelic power." Come, let us stand round the pure tomb and draw grace to our hearts.

Let us raise the ever-virginal body with spiritual arms, and go with her into the grave to die with her. Let us renounce our passions, and live with her in purity, listening to the divine canticles of Angels in the heavenly courts. Let us go in adoring, and learn the wondrous mystery by which she is assumed to heaven, to be with her Son, higher than all the angelic choirs. No one stands between Son and Mother. This, O Mother of God, is my third sermon on thy departure, in lowly reverence to the Holy Trinity to Whom thou didst minister, the goodness of the Father, the power of the Spirit, receiving the Uncreated Word, the Almighty Wisdom and Power of God. Accept, then, my goodwill, which is greater than my capacity, and give us salvation. Heal our passions, cure our diseases, help us out of our difficulties, make our lives peaceful, send us the illumination of the Spirit. In flame us with the desire of thy Son. Render us pleasing to Him, so that we may enjoy happiness with Him, seeing thee resplendent with thy Son's glory, rejoicing forever, keeping feast in the Church with those who worthily celebrate Him who worked our salvation through thee, Christ the Son of God, and our God. To Him be glory and majesty, with the uncreated Father and the all-holy and life-giving Spirit, now and forever, through the endless ages of eternity. Amen.

POSTULATUM OF THE VATICAN COUNCIL

ON February 23, 1870, Joseph Benedict Dusmet, O.S.B., Archbishop of Catania, Sicily, and Louis-Marie Idea, Bishop of the Lipari Islands, introduced the postulata, or requests, of one hundred and ninety-five members of the Vatican Council for an explicit and solemn declaration and definition of the dogma of the Assumption. The nine letters containing the formal petitions to Pope Pius IX were signed respectively by 18, 113, 31, 5, 13, 2, 5, 7, and 1 Fathers of the Council. An interesting discussion of these postulata may be found in an article by Jerome Gassner, O.S.B., "The Vatican Council on the Assumption," (*Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, September, 1950). "No Sting of Death," by Martin C. D'Arcy, S.J., (*Tablet*, November 4, 1950) indicates the original source of the arguments for some of the postulata.

The postulatatum signed by 113 Fathers of the Vatican Council, translated below, enumerates a series of arguments for the Assumption from Scripture, Tradition, and theology.

POSTULATUM OF THE VATICAN COUNCIL

MOST HOLY FATHER, according to the teaching of the Apostle found in Rom. 5-8, I Cor. 15:24, 26, 54, 57, Heb. 2:14, 15, and other passages, Christ enjoyed a triple triumph over Satan, the old serpent; a victory over sin and over concupiscence and death, the results of sin, which form, as it were, the constituent parts of that triumph. In Gen. 3:15, the Mother of God is portrayed as one associated, in a unique manner, in this triumph of her Son. In accordance with the unanimous testimony of the Fathers, we are convinced that in the prophecy referred to, the Blessed Virgin is prefigured as one crowned with that same triple victory.

Consequently, this prophecy pertains to her victory over sin through the Immaculate Conception, her victory over concupiscence by her virginal motherhood, and her unique victory over the common enemy, death, through her speedy resurrection, like that of her Son. All of this received a new clarification from the natural physical union existing between Christ and His Mother. Suarez is therefore right in declaring that Jesus Christ might thus address His holy Mother: "This is the flesh from which My flesh came."

We can also positively affirm that the body of the Blessed Virgin was, in a certain sense, the first step in the salvation of mankind, since from her blood the Body of Christ was formed, that Body which was the price of our redemption. Therefore, we must hold without a shadow of doubt, that the Blessed Virgin's body participated uniquely in the redemption: in other words attained to early glory and immortality.

Moreover, in reference to the resurrection of the Immaculate Virgin, and her assumption into heaven, there is an ancient tradition in both the Eastern and Western Church, as is clear from the unanimous agreement of the Fathers and from uninterrupted liturgical practice. Contributing to the

maintenance of this tradition are the obvious agreement of the resurrection and assumption with the other prerogatives of the Blessed Virgin, the absence of any relics, and her empty tomb. Some authors have shown hesitation, due it would seem to the decree of Pope Gelasius on the subject of apocryphal books; nevertheless, the ancient and respected opinion has met with such approval through the centuries that it is now considered theologically certain and definable as an article of faith, so that it would be a sin for any Catholic to doubt it.

In fact some important writers consider it already as an article of faith. It will be enough at this point to quote Benedict XIV. After vigorously defending the opinion he adds (*Canonization*, 1:42, 15) "This feast is referred to by St. Bernard in his letter 174 to the Canons of Lyons: 'The Church assures me that this day should be held in the highest veneration, since in heaven it was an occasion of boundless joy.' " Moreover, the statements of Gregory of Tours, Andrew of Jerusalem, Pope Gregory the Great, Ildephonsus, bishop of Toledo, John Damascene, and Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, clearly point out that the Blessed Virgin after a peaceful death was assumed at once into heaven.

There are also theological arguments to support the opinion which devoutly maintains the bodily assumption of the Blessed Virgin into heaven. These arguments are drawn from the dignity of the Mother of God, from her unsurpassed virginity, from her unique holiness superior to that of all men and angels, from her unique association and agreement with Christ her Son, and from the love He had for His exalted Mother.

Finally and this is most important, the Church not only celebrates the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into heaven, but also has the faithful listen to the homilies of St. John Damascene and St. Bernard, in which the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, soul and body, into heaven is stated in most eloquent terms. There seems to be absolutely no room for doubt where the Church's teaching authority and liturgical practice are concerned.

From all this it is clear that this privilege, which plays an important role in the Marian scheme, and agrees so completely with other revealed doctrines, could not have been unknown to the Apostles, and particularly to John, and therefore reaches the Church from apostolic tradition.

In the light of these and other important considerations, brought forward by ancient sources and countless ecclesiastical writers throughout the years, we know that this devout and ancient opinion is based on solid grounds and is definable as an article of faith.

Most Holy Father, not many years ago you rendered your infallible pronouncement, long and ardently awaited by the peoples of the world, requested by the eloquent pleas of all nations, and received with enthusiasm by the bishops and the faithful, when you issued the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God. It is to you that we and the Christian people entrusted to our care address a most urgent appeal, that the Church may synthesize all of the glories and triumphs of God's Mother by defining that she was taken up into heaven body and soul.

There is good reason for requesting this glorious step. Just as with her virginal foot the Blessed Virgin crushed the head of the old serpent, so also through this solemn and new manifestation of her glory, she, as the unconquered one, will crush her enemies and those of Christ her Son, who are prospering in these unhappy times. If she will turn her merciful eyes upon us, we are confident that the monstrous errors, presently rife, especially rationalism and materialism, will be quelled like the swelling waters of the ocean, and the awful vices which as in the days of Noah now contaminate the whole world, will be banished. In fact, the very enemies of the Catholic faith, following the guiding light of the Star of the Sea, and swiftly making their way back to the barque of Peter, will again form one fold under one shepherd.

Therefore, Most Holy Father, supreme representative of the priesthood and spokesman of the Catholic Church, we, the Fathers of the Vatican Council, summoned by you, prostrate at those feet of which it is written, "How wonderful are the feet of those who bring the message of peace, the message of good news," most earnestly beg that in this sacred council, your supreme authority declare, proclaim, and define this doctrine that the Mother of God is now living in heaven with her immaculate soul and virginal body. To this end we confidently sign the petition with our own hand.

Signatures of 113 Bishops

DEIPARAE VIRGINIS MARIAE

ON May 1, 1946, Pius XII addressed the encyclical letter *Deiparae Virginis Mariae* to the bishops of the whole world, asking them to express as promptly as possible what they, together with their clergy and faithful, thought both of defining the Assumption and of the opportuneness of proclaiming it as a dogma of faith. In so acting, Pius XII followed the precedent set by Pius IX when he wrote the encyclical letter *Ubi Primum* in 1849, before the definition of the Immaculate Conception.

In *Deiparae Virginis Mariae*, Pius XII makes reference to the collection of Fathers Hentrich and DeMoos, *Petitiones de Assumptione Corporea B. V. Mariae in Caelum*, a two-volume work published in 1942, which contains in more than two thousand pages all of the petitions for the definition received by the Holy See between 1848 and 1940.

DEIPARAE VIRGINIS MARIAE

ENCYCLICAL LETTER OF POPE PIUS XII, MAY 1, 1946

AS THE FAITHFUL call upon the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and obtain her constant help, so they endeavor to venerate her always more and more. Now, it is proper to true and deep love that it keeps seeking ways to give new signs of affection. Thus the faithful have endeavored throughout the centuries to show and increase this love by an ever growing devotion. We are persuaded that this is why Cardinals, Archbishops, and Bishops, priests, religious, sodalists, and university students, a whole multitude of the faithful, have addressed pleas to the Holy See for many years; those received between 1848 and 1940 have recently been gathered into two volumes, edited with commentary and published. These pleas ask for the proclamation and solemn definition of the Assumption into heaven of the Virgin Mary with her body as a dogma of faith. Surely everyone knows that nearly 200 Bishops of the Vatican Council expressed the same desire with great insistence.

As for us, who have been chosen to guard and extend the kingdom of Christ, we have the duty to combat what is harmful and promote what is useful. Thus, since the beginning of our Pontificate, the question we had to set before ourselves and study is whether it is allowable, opportune, and useful that we use our power to follow up the pleas we mentioned. For this reason we have not omitted, nor do we now omit, to pray with fervor that God may inspire us and make us know His most adorable will.

Unite your prayers to ours, venerable brethren, to obtain this heavenly light. In exhorting you with fatherly care to do so, we are following the example of our predecessors, and especially of Pius IX regarding the definition of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God; and in asking of your good will that you communicate to us the feeling of the

clergy and the faithful committed to your care with respect to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, we desire most ardently to know if you, venerable brethren, in your great wisdom and prudence, think that the corporal Assumption of the holy Virgin can be proposed and defined as a dogma of faith, and if you together with your clergy and people desire it.

While awaiting your responses—and the sooner they reach us the more grateful we will be—we ask for you, venerable brethren, and for yours, the grace of God, and the favor of the generous and august Virgin.

Pius XII

HOMILY ON THE ASSUMPTION

THIRTY-FIVE CARDINALS, two-thirds of the members of the Sacred College, took part in the semi-public consistory held October 30, 1950, to voice their assent to the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption. The Cardinals all replied "Placet" ("It is pleasing") when His Holiness Pius XII asked the group whether it is "your good pleasure" that the dogma be defined.

Also at the consistory were some five hundred patriarchs, archbishops, and bishops. Their collective assent to the definition was expressed in a declaration by Patriarch Joseph VII Ghanima of Babylon. This group included twelve members of the American hierarchy.

HOMILY ON THE ASSUMPTION

ALLOCUTION OF POPE PIUS XII, OCTOBER 30, 1950

YOU WELL KNOW the motive for which we have convoked this Sacred Consistory today. It is an event which will fill us, you and the whole Catholic world with unspeakable joy. On the first of November, the Feast of All Saints, the radiant brow of the Queen of Heaven and of the beloved Mother of God will be wreathed with new splendor, when, under divine inspiration and assistance, we shall solemnly define and decree her bodily Assumption into heaven.

With the authority which the Divine Redeemer transmitted to the Prince of the Apostles and to his successors, we have the intention of ordaining and defining what from the earliest days the Church piously believes and honors, what the Holy Fathers have elaborated and brought to a clearer light through the centuries, and what the faithful of all classes everywhere have earnestly requested and implored by innumerable documents—namely, that Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, was assumed, body and soul, into the glory of heaven.

Before taking this resolution, we deemed it opportune, as you are aware, to entrust the study of the matter to experts. They, at our command, assembled all the requests which had been addressed to the Holy See on the matter, and examined them with all attention, so that there might emerge, in the clearest possible manner, what the Sacred Magisterium and the entire Catholic Church held should be believed on this point of doctrine.

Furthermore, at our bidding, they studied with the greatest diligence all the attestations, indications and references in the common faith of the Church regarding the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into heaven, whether in the concordant teaching of the Sacred Magisterium, or in the Sacred Scripture, or in the most ancient cult of the Church,

as well as, lastly, in the writings of the Fathers and of the theologians and in the admirable harmony of this with other revealed truths.

We also sent letters to all the Bishops requesting them to state not only their own opinion, but also the thought and desire of the clergy and faithful.

In a wonderful and almost unanimous chorus, the voices of the pastors and of the faithful from every part of the world reached us professing the same faith and requesting the same things as supremely desired by all. We judged then that there was no reason for further delay, and we decided to proceed to the definition of the dogma.

If it is true that the entire Catholic Church cannot deceive or be deceived, the Divine Redeemer, Who is truth itself, having promised to the Apostles: "And behold, I am with you all days even unto the consummation of the world," it follows that this truth, firmly believed by the holy pastors and by the people, has been revealed by God, and can be defined by our supreme authority.

Nor is it without the will of Divine Providence that this happy event should coincide with the Holy Year, which is now drawing to a close. It seems that to all and especially to those who from all parts of the earth came to this beloved city to purify their souls and renew their life in Christian practice, the Blessed Virgin Mary, resplendent on her throne as with a new light, stretched forth her maternal arms exhorting them to climb with courage the heights of virtue, so that, at the end of their earthly exile they may come to the enjoyment of supreme happiness in their heavenly home.

May the sublime Mother of God take under her watchful protection the innumerable multitudes, whom, with unspeakable joy, we have seen giving proof of fervent faith and ardent piety as they throng not only the house of the Common Father and the immense Basilica of St. Peter, but also the square of St. Peter, and the adjoining streets, and may she obtain for them the heavenly lights and those gifts whereby they, illuminated and strengthened, may tend more readily to Christian perfection.

Further, we nourish the great hope that the beloved Mother of God, crowned with new glory on earth, may contemplate with loving gaze and bind to herself those who languish in spiritual apathy, or slothfully

dally in the snares of vice, or who, having lost the straight way of truth, do not recognize that sublime dignity of hers with which the privilege of her bodily Assumption into heaven is strictly connected.

May our most benign Mother, assumed to the glory of heaven, lead to that divine light which descends only from on high the entire human race, which, in many places is still enveloped in the darkness of error, tormented by cruel chastisements and afflicted by grave dangers. May she obtain for them those supernal consolations which restore and raise up the soul of man, even if prostrate with frightful sufferings.

May she obtain from her Divine Son that peace, which is based, as on a most solid foundation, on the tranquillity of right order, on the just treatment of citizens and peoples, and on the liberty and dignity due to all, may finally return to shine among the nations and peoples at present divided to the common detriment.

May she above all defend, with her most powerful patronage, the Catholic Church, which in not a few parts of the world is either little known or is charged with false accusations and calumnies, or oppressed by unjust persecutions; and may she lead back to the unity of the Church all the erring and the wayward.

May you, venerable brothers, and with you the entire Christian people, strive to obtain all these things from the heavenly Mother by fervent prayer.

But now, although, as we have said, the answers of the Bishops of all parts of the world have reached us on this matter, we desired nevertheless that you manifest your opinion to this thronged and august assembly also.

Is it your good pleasure, venerable brothers, that we proclaim and define, as a dogma revealed by God, the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin into heaven?

[After receiving the views of those present, expressed by the word "placet" or "non placet," the Pope continued.]

We greatly rejoice that all of you as with one thought and one voice assent to that which we ourselves think fitting and desire; because by this admirable agreement of the Cardinals and Bishops with the Roman Pontiff there emerges still more clearly what the Holy Church believes, teaches and desires in this matter.

You will nevertheless kindly continue to implore God with unceasing prayer, so that, by His favor and inspiration, that which all ardently await may happily come to pass; and may this event redound to the honor of the Holy Name of God, to the benefit of the Christian religion, to the glory of the most Blessed Virgin, and may it be for all a new incentive to piety toward her.

MUNIFICENTISSIMUS DEUS

By August, 1950, 1191 Bishops had responded to the Pope's encyclical letter of May, 1946. Of these, 98.2% had answered *yes* to both the question of definability and opportuneness. Sixteen were doubtful about the advisability of defining the dogma at this time, and six questioned the advisability of declaring it a dogma. With such an unprecedented unanimity of opinion, the Pope announced his intention of declaring the Assumption a dogma.

On November 1, the Pope, seated in a portable red damask-covered throne set up before the obelisk in St. Peter's Square, read extracts (lasting four minutes) from the 6000-word bull, *Munificentissimus Deus*, proclaiming the dogma. The complete document examines the historical background of the doctrine, traces the proofs and indications of belief in the Assumption from the earliest times of the Church, emphasizes the liturgical feast of the Assumption, and considers the question in the light of Scripture and the writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church.

This translation of *Munificentissimus Deus* was made by Msgr. Ronald A. Knox.

MUNIFICENTISSIMUS DEUS

PAPAL BULL OF POPE PIUS XII, NOVEMBER 1, 1950

GOD MOST BOUNTIFUL, Who can do things, grounding the order of His providence on wisdom and love, has His own secret design for men and nations alike, tempering our sorrow with alternations of happiness, this way and that, by this means or that, till everything helps to secure the good of those who love Him.¹ So it has been with our Pontificate, and with these times we live in; burdened with such solicitude, such anxious cares; all these grievous calamities, all these backslidings from true belief and right principle; yet one sight there is which brings us real consolation. Wherever the Catholic faith shows itself publicly and in action, we see love for God's Virgin Mother grow stronger and warmer with each day that passes, the earnest indication everywhere of better and holier living. The Blessed Virgin, playing a mother's part so tenderly towards all those whom the blood of Christ has redeemed—what wonder if her children study the special gifts bestowed on her ever more closely, ever more eagerly?

From all eternity, the Blessed Virgin has been the object of God's unique loving regard; and when at last the appointed time came, His Providence saw to it that all the gifts and graces freely bestowed on her should be characterized by a kind of inner coherence. It is the inner coherence of these free graces that the Church has been studying more and more all down the centuries, and it has been left for our own age to see in a clearer light than before one particular privilege conferred on the Mother of God—her bodily Assumption into heaven.

When our predecessor, Pius IX of undying memory, defined the doctrine of her Immaculate Conception, this other privilege of hers showed already in brighter colors. After all, there was the closest possible bond between the two. Christ, by His own death, overcame death as well as

sin, and through Him the supernatural rebirth given us in baptism puts death as well as sin behind us; but it is not God's will that this triumph over death should be realized, for the redeemed in general, before the end of the world; their bodies decay when they die, ready to be united, at the last day, with the glorified souls which belong to them. From this general law, God would have the Blessed Virgin exempt. Immaculately conceived by God's unique dispensation, she rose superior to sin; on her, then, the general law was not binding—not for her the tomb's decay, not for her to wait until the Day of Judgment before her body could be redeemed.

The solemn declaration once made that God's Virgin Mother was set free, thus early, from the guilty taint of her race, what wonder if hope beat high among Christian people that the living voice of the Church would define, without further ado, the doctrine of her bodily Assumption? There was no mistaking the demand for it, not only among Christians who occupied a private station, but among the representatives of nations and of ecclesiastical provinces; it was urged by a number of voices at the Vatican Council itself. As time went on, the stream of petitions to this effect showed no sign of drying up; on the contrary, it grew daily in volume and intensity. Earnest campaigns of prayer were organized about it; it was a subject of study for many well-known theologians and as such was eagerly canvassed both in private and in public by ecclesiastical universities and other colleges where sacred learning is handed on; in many parts of the world national or international congresses were held in Mary's honor. All this public interest, all these inquiries, brought out the facts in stronger relief; it was there, contained in the deposit of faith entrusted to the Church, this doctrine that the Virgin Mary had been taken up bodily into heaven. Petitions followed more often than not, humbly imploring the Apostolic See to make this truth the subject of a solemn definition.

If the faithful thus vied with one another in attesting their devotion, they had no lack of support from their Bishops; it was remarkable how many of these sent petitions to the throne of Peter in the same sense. At the time of our accession to the Pontificate, many thousands of such petitions had reached the Apostolic See from all parts of the world, and from people of every rank; from our dear sons, the Sacred College of

Cardinals, from our worshipful brethren, the Archbishops and Bishops, from dioceses and parishes everywhere. Earnest were the prayers we addressed to Almighty God, asking for the light of His Holy Spirit in deciding a question of such moment; stringent were the conditions we laid down for the common task of investigating it more closely; and in the meanwhile we gave orders for the collection and careful examination of all the requests that had been made of the Holy See in connection with Our Lady's Assumption, from the time when our predecessor of happy memory, Pius IX, was reigning down to our own.² It was a matter of far-reaching importance, and we thought it right to approach all our worshipful Brethren in the episcopate with a direct, official demand; each was to open his own mind to us, and in his own words. It was the first of May, 1946, that we issued to them the letter *Deiparae Virginis*, which contained the words:

Tell me, venerable brethren, with what wisdom and prudence you have at your command: is the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin a doctrine which can be set forth as a defined doctrine of the faith? Is it your earnest wish, and that of your clergy and people, that this should be done?

Bishops of the Holy Spirit's appointing, shepherds of God's Church,³ what answer did they make? Almost without exception, they answered both questions in the affirmative. Here was a most notable consensus of opinion, both among the Bishops of the Catholic world and among the faithful;⁴ all agreed that the bodily Assumption of God's Mother into heaven is a dogma that may be defined as of faith. We were faced by complete unanimity of doctrine among those responsible for the day-to-day teaching of the Church, by complete unanimity of belief among the faithful, whom that teaching upholds and directs. This of itself would be enough to prove, conclusively and beyond all doubt, that the bestowal of the privilege in question is a truth revealed by God; it has a place among those supernatural truths which were entrusted by Christ to His own Bride, that she must ever faithfully keep, and infallibly make known.⁵ Not by mere human effort, but protected from all error by the Spirit of truth,⁶ the teaching Authority of the Church continues to fulfill the duty

so committed to it, that of keeping these truths pure and whole. It hands them down uncontaminated, adding nothing to them, losing nothing of them. This is the teaching of the Vatican Council:

The gift of the Holy Spirit promised to Peter's successors does not mean that He will reveal to them fresh truths which they are to publish; it means that He will enable them scrupulously to preserve, and loyally to proclaim, the tradition handed down by the Apostles—what is known as the deposit of faith.⁷

Given this universal consent, the day-to-day teaching of the Church is proof positive, establishing the truth of Our Lady's bodily Assumption into heaven. And establishing it—how? Something is here involved, which no faculty of the human intelligence could possibly have found out for itself; namely, that the virgin body which gave birth to God has been glorified in heaven. The truth, then, must be one divinely revealed; one (consequently) which all loyal sons of the Church are bound to accept with unhesitating faith. The Vatican Council again assures us that:

"We must accept, as belonging to the divine faith of the Catholic Church, all that comes to us through God's word, whether written or handed down, and is propounded by the Church for our belief as something divinely revealed, either by solemn decree, or in the course of her day-to-day teaching all the world over."⁸

Of this universal belief proofs are forthcoming, indications of it, traces it has left, all down the centuries from the distant past; as time went on, the conviction showed in a fuller light. That the Blessed Virgin, during her earthly pilgrimage, lived a life not immune from anxiety, need and unhappiness, the faithful knew well enough. They had learned it under the guidance of the pastors who taught them, from Holy Scripture itself. When she stood by the Cross of her Son Who redeemed us, old Simeon's prophecy came true, and a sharp sword pierced her very heart. No reason, then, to doubt that the great Mother of God underwent death, as her Divine Son did. But did this mean that her sacred body was subject to the ravages of the tomb, that the hallowed tabernacle in which

the Incarnate Word had dwelt could be made over to dust and decay? That did not follow, and they loudly declared their belief to the contrary. So well divine grace enlightened them; such reverence they had for that loving Mother of ours who is God's Mother too. All the while they were coming to see it more clearly, that wonderful coherence we have spoken of. How well they matched one another, those gifts God bestowed on the dear Accomplice of our redemption, gifts beyond the compass of any other created being, the human nature of Jesus Christ alone excepted!

Proof, too, of the same belief are the countless churches which have been dedicated to the Assumption; and the sacred effigies there exposed for the veneration of the faithful, recalling this triumph of hers to the general view. Cities, dioceses and countries have entrusted their safety to the patronage of God's Virgin Mother raised to heaven; religious institutes have been founded, with the Church's sanction, taking their name from that special title. It is significant, too, that in the devotion of the holy Rosary, so often mentioned by the Apostolic See with commendation, one of the mysteries prescribed for meditation is, as we all know, that of Our Lady's Assumption into heaven.

This conviction, shared alike by the Bishops and the faithful, is attested still more luminously, and on a world-wide scale, by the liturgical feasts, going far back into antiquity, both in the East and in the West, which commemorate it. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church have never neglected Liturgy as a source of information. Liturgy, it is well known:

Expressing, as it does, supernatural truths under the direction of the Church's teaching authority, can supply arguments of no little weight, when this or that theological argument is under discussion.⁹

And liturgical documents, whenever they catalogue a feast of Our Lady's Assumption or Dormition, do so in the same language. They bear witness that when she was done with this earthly exile, and made her passage to heaven, such order was taken by Providence for the bestowal of her sacred body as should befit the Mother of the Incarnate Word, and match the other gifts that were vouchsafed to her. A notable instance of this is to be found in the Sacramentary of our predecessor Hadrian I, of immortal memory, sent to the Emperor Charlemagne. It contains the words:

High festival, Lord, keep we this day, the day on which God's holy Mother bodily death must undergo; yet might not the toils of death hold that body prisoner, whence thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ was born incarnate.¹⁰

Such unimpassioned language is characteristic of the Roman liturgy; other liturgical documents of great age, Eastern and Western, give a richer and fuller treatment to the subject. Thus the Gallican Sacramentary describes the feast of the Assumption as "a mystery past our searching, yet of our telling most worthy; when did mankind see the like, that a Maid should be taken up to heaven?" And the liturgy of Byzantium is not content to connect her bodily Assumption, again and again, with the honor due to God's Mother; it will match this special endowment of hers with all the others; and especially with that miracle of Virgin Child-bearing which was God's gracious will for her. It says:

On thee, God, that is king of all, bestowed such gifts as are out of nature, scathe should not be in thy Son's enwombing, nor corruption in thy own entombing; and at last, by a wondrous passage hence, he would take thee up into glory.¹¹

The Prince of the Apostles was entrusted with the office of supporting his brethren,¹² and this office the Apostolic See has inherited. Its influence, in giving this feast more solemnity as time went on, has inspired the faithful to weigh, ever more justly, the importance of the mystery it commemorates. From being a great feast, as all feasts of Our Lady must be, it has come to rank among the most solemn celebrations of the whole liturgical year. When our predecessor, St. Sergius I, decreed that the Litanies (that is, the procession round the Stations) should be held on the four feasts of Our Lady, he included, with her Nativity, Annunciation and Purification, the feast of her Falling Asleep.¹³ It was already called the Assumption of the holy Mother of God when St. Leo IV prescribed its more solemn observance, giving it a vigil and an octave; he himself, accompanied by a great crowd of worshippers, gladly took the opportunity of sharing in these celebrations.¹⁴ How old a custom it was, to fast on the

vigil of this day, may be plainly seen from the evidence of our predecessor Nicholas I, in his enumeration of the principal feasts "which the holy Roman Church has inherited from ancient times, and observes still."¹⁵

Still, the *lex orandi* is child, not parent, to the *lex credendi*; liturgy is only the fruit on the tree. The Fathers of the Church, the great Doctors, in the sermons they preached on this occasion, did not go to the liturgy for their inspiration. Their theme was a doctrine which all the Christian world already knew and accepted; it was for them to elaborate it, to bring out the essential meaning of it, beyond what lay on the surface. And in doing this they threw into relief precisely that aspect of it which liturgical formularies had often only sketched in outline. To say that the body of the Blessed Virgin never knew decay was not to exhaust the meaning of this solemnity. What we celebrated was the triumph she won over death when she was glorified, after the pattern of her only Son Jesus Christ, up in heaven.

Thus St. John Damascene, the interpreter of this tradition *par excellence*, makes an eloquent comparison between the high privileges conferred on the Mother of God in general, and her bodily Assumption.

Uncorrupt her body must needs be in the tomb, that in childbearing had no scathe of her virginity. Lodging she must have in the heavenly tabernacle, that had lodged the Creator in her bosom. Bride of the Father's espousing, yonder she must have her bower. Christ she had watched hanging on the tree (and then felt her pangs first); should she not have sight of him enthroned at his Father's side? God's Mother, and all his wealth hers to enjoy; God's Mother and handmaid both, every creature her vassal.¹⁶

These words of St. John Damascene faithfully echo the sentiments of many Fathers besides, dating from the same, or from an earlier period, who have spoken no less definitely in their sermons, often preached on the occasion of the feast. Thus St. Germanus of Constantinople sees the translation of Our Lady's incorrupt body as fitting in, not only with

her Divine Motherhood, but with a special sanctity which attaches to its virgin state.

In beauty revealed, so it was written: all the virgin body of thee so holy, so chaste, so full of God's indwelling, cousinship it has none henceforward with the dust. Changed it must surely be when it puts on immortality, yet it is ever the same; but living now and wondrously glorified, and safe from all harm, and made free for the life that is perfect.¹⁷

And another very ancient author writes thus:

Mother most glorious of Jesus Christ our Savior and our God, that gave us eternal life, quickened she must needs be through him, that from the tomb has raised her, and taken her up, He best knows how, to Himself.¹⁸

As the feast came to be celebrated more widely and with ever-growing devotion, Bishops and preachers felt obliged, more than ever, to give a clear account of the mystery they were celebrating, and to show how it is bound up with the rest of revealed truth. And some of the scholastic theologians would search deeper yet; they must show how the Catholic faith harmonizes with the results of theological reasoning. And they saw a significant connection between this doctrine of Our Lady's Assumption and the divine truths made known to us by Scripture. Using these as their starting-point, they had no difficulty in finding arguments which threw light on the privilege in question. They began by pointing out that Jesus Christ, in the great love he bore for His Mother, would naturally wish to see her taken up into heaven; then they laid stress on the marvelous worth which attaches itself to her Divine Motherhood and to the gifts which go with it—that high holiness which is beyond the compass of man or angels, the intimate association between Mother and Son, the love Christ showed towards her, so marked and so well merited. Often enough, like the Fathers of the Church before them,¹⁹ these theologians and preachers would make bold to borrow illustrations for their belief in the Assumption from stories or phrases used in the Bible. Thus, to cite

the commonest instances, they will quote the words of the Psalmist, "Up, Lord, and take possession of Thy resting-place, Thou and the ark which is Thy shrine!"²⁰—that ark which bore record of the covenant, fashioned out of wood incorruptible, and laid up in God's temple, seemed to them an image of Mary's Virgin body, rescued from decay and carried up in glory to heaven. Or, pursuing the same subject, they will refer to the Queen who enters the heavenly palace and sits down at her Son's right hand;²¹ or they will tell us how the bride in the Canticles "makes her way up by the desert road, erect as a column of smoke, all myrrh and incense" to receive her crown.²² These are types, they assure us, of that heavenly Queen and Bride who followed her Son into the courts of heaven.

Nor were they content, these scholastic writers, with images drawn from the Old Testament; they saw a reference to the Assumption in that figure of a woman clothed with the sun which the Apostle John saw on Patmos.²³ And they gave great attention to another New Testament passage, "Hail, thou who art full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women"; that fullness of grace bestowed on the Blessed Virgin was only achieved by her Assumption; that was, above all, the blessing which ran counter to the curse of Eve. So Amadeus, the saintly Bishop of Lausanne, on the very eve of the scholastic period, claims that the body of the Blessed Virgin remained incorrupt—to condemn such flesh as hers to decay were blasphemy—being, in fact, reunited with her soul, to share its heavenly crown.

Was she not full of grace, was she not blessed among women? True God of true God, maid she must be that conceived, maid that bore, maid that suckled Him; on her bosom she carried Him, and gave Him all the care a mother might give.²⁴

But among all the writers of that period who threw light and lustre on this pious belief by quotations, types and analogies from Scripture, the Evangelical Doctor, St. Anthony of Padua, stands alone. He preached on the feast of the Assumption from the text in Isaiah, "I will have honor paid to this, the resting-place of my feet,"²⁵ and drew the clear

inference that our Divine Savior conferred glory unexampled on the Mother who bore him. He says:

Here is proof, it was in her body, the Lord's resting place, that the Blessed Virgin was taken up to heaven. Whereupon the holy Psalmist writes: "*Up Lord, and take possession of thy resting place, thou and the ark which is thy shrine!*" Jesus Christ, he says, rose triumphant over death and ascended to His Father's side; and no less surely the ark that had been His shrine rose with Him, when His Virgin Mother went up to her heavenly bower.²⁶

We have now reached the Middle Ages, when the theology of the Schoolmen was at its height. Here is St. Albert the Great marshalling a whole array of arguments, derived from Scripture, tradition, liturgy, reasoned theology, and concluding:

From these reasons given, these authorities cited, and many other the like, clear it is that the Blessed Mother of God was taken up above the choirs of Angels, in soul and body both. And this, upon ever ground, we hold to be the truth.²⁷

And in his sermon on the feast of the Annunciation, with the Angelic Salutation for its text, this same Comprehensive Doctor contrasts the Holy Virgin with Eve, most plainly declaring her to be exempt from that fourfold curse to which Eve was subject.²⁸ The Angelic Doctor was true to his great master's teaching; he never treats of this question *ex professo*, but every chance reference proves that he shared the belief of the Catholic Church, namely that Mary's body, and not her soul only, was taken up into heaven.²⁹

And what of the Seraphic Doctor? He, like many authors of less note, can be quoted as holding the same opinion. Her Son conceived and born without prejudice to her virgin purity or her virgin state, would God have allowed that body to decay into dust? He holds it to be impossible.³⁰ Elsewhere, he comments on the words, "Who is this that makes her way

up by the desert road, all gaily clad, leaning upon the arm of her true love?"³¹ which he applies, in a symbolical sense, to the Blessed Virgin. And his argument runs:

Fresh proof is here, she is in heaven bodily. . . . The state of bliss were not perfect, except she were there in her full personship. And this personship is twofold, not of the soul only; she is there, then, in her twofold being, that is, soul and body both; else had she not found her perfect bliss.³²

In the fifteenth century, when the age of the Schoolmen was drawing to its close, St. Bernardine of Siena summed up and reviewed all the language and thought of the Middle Ages on this subject. And he was not content to repeat the arguments of his predecessors; he would add others of his own. There is a likeness between Mother and Son, so well matched in their noble qualities both of body and mind, which makes it impossible for us to think of them as kept apart; it means that "where Christ is not, Mary has no title to be."³³ He thinks it is fully in accord with right reason that the glory of heaven should have been attained by a Woman as well as a Man, body and soul alike. And how do we account for the fact that the Church has never tried to find any relics of the Blessed Virgin, or exposed such relics to veneration? This may even be described as a kind of "empirical proof."³⁴

Latterly, such expressions as those we have quoted from Fathers and Doctors of the Church took rank as commonplaces. St. Robert Bellarmine was but making his own a point of view which had long since been traditional, when he exclaimed:

Oh, who should bring himself to believe that it is fallen in ruins, this ark of holiness, this home of the Word Incarnate, this temple of the Holy Ghost? Does not the mind recoil from the very thought of it, this virgin flesh to be the breeding ground of dust, the prey of worms, that had gendered and born, had suckled and nursed a God?³⁵

It were a blasphemy, says St. Francis of Sales, to doubt that Jesus Christ fulfilled the commandment which bids us honor our parents. "And is there a son," he asks, "who would not call his own mother back to life when she is dead, aye, and usher her into Paradise, if he could?"³⁶ And St. Alphonsus writes: "Christ was not minded to let his Mother's body undergo corruption in death; it being so little honorable to Him that the virgin flesh, from which His own flesh was derived, should be dissolved into its elements."³⁷

The mystery which this feast recalls had by now been put in its true setting, and there were teachers to be found who no longer concerned themselves with proving that the doctrine of the Assumption had right and reason on its side. What was, in fact, the faith of the Church, Christ's mystical bride without spot or wrinkle,³⁸ described by one who was himself an Apostle as "the pillar and foundation upon which the truth rests?"³⁹ Taking their stand on this common faith, they declared the contrary opinion to be rash, even if it avoided the stigma of heresy. St. Peter Canisius by no means stood alone when he claimed that the word "Assumption" could have only one meaning—soul and body alike had been taken up into glory. And it was the "Assumption" of Our Lady that the Church had been celebrating, year by year, for centuries. He writes:

It is a belief that has held the field for several centuries before this, and is now so deeply implanted in the minds of pious persons, so commendable to the Church at large, that the contrary opinion is not to be listened to. If a man will not agree that Mary's body was taken up to heaven, then I would have him hissed down altogether as a rash controversialist, imbued not with a Catholic but with a heretical spirit.⁴⁰

So, too, his great contemporary, the Notable Doctor. Where the theology of Our Lady is concerned, he gives us a rule of his own to work by: "Due regard being had to what is fitting, and where no authority of Holy Scripture is infringed, God's dealings with the Blessed Virgin are to be understood, not by His ordinary way of working, but as He is omnipo-

tent."⁴¹ Then he takes his stand on the common belief of the universal Church, and concludes that the mystery of the Assumption claims the same unhesitating acceptance as that of the Immaculate Conception; he was prepared to argue, even then, that such truths could be a proper subject of definition.

In the last resort, all these Fathers, all these theologians, base their conclusions on the Bible, which has given us the picture of Our Lord's Mother as inseparably attached to her Divine Son, and constantly sharing his lot. It seems impossible to imagine her as apart from Him after death, in body any more than in soul, the Mother who conceived and bore and suckled Him, who carried Him in her arms and clasped Him to her breast. Her Son, He could not but love and honor her next to His eternal Father, whose law He kept so perfectly; and since it lay in His power to pay her this supreme honor, of sparing her from the ravages of the tomb, we must needs believe that He did so. It is to be remembered that, from the second century onwards, Our Lady has been identified by the Fathers of the Church as the Second Eve. Not on the same level, indeed, as the Second Adam, but intimately associated in His warfare against the Enemy of our race. It was to issue, as we know from the Promise made in Paradise, in a complete triumph over sin and death, those twin enemies that are so often coupled together by St. Paul.⁴² Of this victory, Our Lord's Resurrection is the operative part, the supreme trophy; but Our Lady, too, who shared in the conflict, must share in its conclusion, through the glorifying of that virgin body of hers. Only then, as the Apostle says, "when this mortal nature wears its immortality, the saying of scripture will come true, *Death is swallowed up in victory.*"⁴³

Great Mother of God, so wondrously united with Jesus Christ, from all eternity, by the same decree of Providence;⁴⁴ in her conception immaculate, in her Divine Motherhood a Virgin unscathed, the noble Accomplish of our Redeemer in His victory over sin and its consequences—what reward awaited her at last? For the crown of all her graces, she was exempted from the sentence of decay; shared her Son's victory over death, and was carried up to heaven, soul and body of her, there to reign as queen at His right hand, Who is the King of Ages, the immortal.⁴⁵

And now, whereas the Universal Church, with the Spirit of truth strong in her, that brings her ever to more perfect knowledge of revealed

doctrines, has manifested her faith upon many occasions as the centuries went by; and whereas the Bishops of the world have asked, with a consent almost universal, that the doctrine of Our Lady's bodily Assumption into heaven should be defined; and whereas the said doctrine is grounded upon Scripture, is deeply implanted in the minds of the faithful, is attested by the immemorial practice of the Church, is fully in harmony with other revealed truths, and has been lucidly set forth by the learned labors of theology; we believe that the moment has come, in accordance with the designs of Providence, to pronounce solemnly on this signal privilege which the Blessed Virgin enjoys.

To the special patronage of this holy Virgin we have dedicated our whole Pontificate, and had recourse to her in the darkest hours. We have publicly consecrated the whole human race to her Immaculate Heart, and had experience, many times over, of its sovereign protection. And now we are confident that this solemn pronouncement, defining the doctrine of her Assumption, will greatly contribute to the well-being of human society, redounding, as it does, to the glory of the Blessed Trinity, with whom the Virgin Mother of God is so closely conjoined. There is good reason to hope that all the faithful will be inspired with greater devotion towards their Mother in heaven, and that all those who make their boast in the name of Christ will long more fervently to be united with the Mystical Body, as their love for her, who is Mother to every member of it, grows stronger yet. Reason, too, to hope that as men contemplate Mary's noble example, they will understand better what value there is in a human life, if it be devoted to the doing of God's will and the service of others. The lying doctrines of materialism and the consequent decay of morals threaten even now to put out the light of conscience, and to sacrifice human lives in the service of fresh quarrels. But here is a beacon, clear to all eyes, pointing us towards the high destiny for which body and soul alike were created. May faith in the bodily Assumption of Our Lady teach our faith in the Resurrection to strike deeper roots, bear fruit more abundantly!

It is a happy design of Providence, that this solemn event should fall within the Holy Year that is now passing. This has enabled us to celebrate the Jubilee by adding one fresh jewel to the Virgin's crown, and

raise a monument, more lasting than bronze, to the fervent love we bear her.

And so, after much prayer offered in supplication to God, much invocation of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God omnipotent, Who has bestowed on the Blessed Virgin so great a favor, to the honor of His Son, the King of ages, the immortal, conqueror of sin and death, to the greater praise of this same holy Mother, and to the joy and jubilee of the whole Church, by the authority of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and of His blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by the authority granted to us, we proclaim it, we declare it, we define it, as a doctrine divinely revealed: That the immaculate ever-virgin Mother of God, her earthly life ended, was taken up, body and soul of her, into the glory of heaven. Wherefore if any man, which God forbid, should dare wittingly and willingly to deny or call in question the doctrine we have so defined, be it known to him that he has thereby fallen away from the Divine faith of the Catholic Church.

(To notify the Church Universal that the doctrine of Our Lady's Assumption has been defined, we would have this Apostolic Letter of ours preserved in permanent attestation of it. And any copy of it, written or printed, that is signed by a public notary and carries the seal of the appropriate ecclesiastical authority, is to command the same acceptance from all to whom it is communicated, as if it had been the original. And this declaration, proclamation and definition aforesaid, being thus published, let no one make any alteration in any page of it, nor presume to gainsay it or thwart its effect; or else he must give account to Almighty God and to His holy Apostles Peter and Paul for the said injury.

Given at St. Peter's in Rome on the first day of November, being the feast of All Hallows, in this year of Jubilee nineteen hundred and fifty, the twelfth year of our Pontificate. Signed by me, Pius, Bishop of the Catholic Church, definitively.)

¹ Rom. 8:28.

² G. Hentrich and R. Gualterus de Moos, *Petitiones de Assumptione Corporea B.V.M.* 2 vols. Vatican Polyglot Press, 1942.

³ Acts 20:28.

⁴ *Ineffabilis Deus.*

⁵ Vatican Council, *De fide Catholica*, ch. 4.

⁶ John 14:26.

⁷ Vatican Council, *De ecclesia Christi*, ch. 4.

⁸ Vatican Council, *De fide Catholica*, ch. 3.

⁹ Encyclical *Mediator Dei*, A.A.S. 39, p. 541.

¹⁰ Gregorian Sacramentary.

¹¹ Menaeum for the whole year.

¹² Luke 22:32.

¹³ Liber Pontificalis.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Reply of Pope Nicholas I to the questions sent from Bulgaria.

¹⁶ St. John Damascene, *Panegyric on the Falling Asleep of God's Mother, the ever-virgin Mary*, II, 14. Cf. also section 3.

¹⁷ St. Germanus of Constantinople, *On the Falling Asleep of God's Holy Mother*. Sermon No. 1.

¹⁸ St. Modestus of Jerusalem (attributed to), *Panegyric on the Falling Asleep of our Blessed Lady, God's Mother, the ever-virgin Mary*, n. 14.

¹⁹ St. John Damascene, *op. cit.*, II, 11.

²⁰ Psalm 131:8.

²¹ Psalm 44:10, 14-16.

²² Cant. 3:6; 4:8; 6:9.

²³ Apoc. 12:1 ff.

²⁴ Amadeus of Lausanne, *On the Blessed Virgin's Death, Assumption into Heaven, and Exaltation at her Son's Right Hand*.

²⁵ Isaias 60:13.

²⁶ Saint Anthony of Padua, *Sermons for Sundays and Great Feasts*, sermon *On the Assumption of St. Mary, Virgin*.

²⁷ St. Albert the Great, *Mariale*, q. 132.

²⁸ St. Albert the Great, *Sermons on the Saints*, sermon *On Blessed Mary's Annunciation*; cf. also *Mariale*, q. 132.

²⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 3a, q. 27, a. 1; q. 83, a. 5 ad 8; Explanation of the Hail Mary; Explanation of the Apostles' Creed, art. 5; *On the Four Sentences*, d. 12, q. 1, art. 3, sol. 3; d. 43, q. 1, art. 3, sol. 1, 2.

³⁰ St. Bonaventure, *On Our Lady's Nativity*, Sermon 5.

³¹ Cant. 8:5.

³² St. Bonaventure, *On Our Lady's Assumption*, Sermon 1.

³³ St. Bernardine of Siena, *On the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin*, Sermon 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ St. Robert Bellarmine, Louvain conferences, Sermon 40, *On the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin*.

³⁶ St. Francis de Sales, *Autograph sermon for the Feast of the Assumption*.

³⁷ St. Alphonsus Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, II, 1.

³⁸ Eph. 5:27.

³⁹ I Tim. 3:15.

⁴⁰ St. Peter Canisius, *De Maria Virgine*.

⁴¹ Suarez, *On the Pars Tertia of St. Thomas*, q. 27, a. 2, d. 3, sec. 5, n. 31.

⁴² Rom. 5, 6; I Cor. 15:21-26, 54-57.

⁴³ I Cor. 15:54.

⁴⁴ *Ineffabilis Deus*.

⁴⁵ I Tim. 1:17.

ASSUMPTION PRAYER

of

POPE PIUS XII

O IMMACULATE VIRGIN, Mother of God and Mother of Men, —we believe with all the fervor of our Faith in your triumphal Assumption, both in body and soul, into heaven where you are acclaimed as Queen of all the choirs of angels and all the legions of the Saints; and we unite with them to praise and bless the Lord Who has exalted you above all other pure creatures, and to offer you the tribute of our devotion and our love.

We know that your gaze, which on earth watched over the humble and suffering humanity of Jesus, in heaven is filled with the vision of that humanity glorified, and with the vision of uncreated wisdom, and that the joy of your soul in the direct contemplation of the adorable Trinity causes your heart to throb with overwhelming tenderness.

And we, poor sinners, whose body weighs down the flight of the soul, beg you to purify our hearts so that, while we remain here below, we may learn to see God and God alone in the beauties of His creatures.

We trust that your merciful eyes may deign to glance down upon our miseries and our sorrows; upon our struggles and our weaknesses; that your countenance may smile upon our joys and our victories; that you may hear the voice of Jesus saying to you of each one of us, as He once said to you of His beloved disciple: behold thy son.

And we, who call upon you as our Mother, we, like John, take you as the guide, strength and consolation of our mortal life.

We are inspired by the certainty that your eyes, which wept over the earth watered by the blood of Jesus, are yet turned toward this world, held in the clutch of wars, persecutions, oppression of the just and the weak.

And from the shadows of this vale of tears, we seek in your heavenly assistance and tender mercy comfort for our aching hearts and help in the trials of the Church and of our fatherland.

We believe, finally, that in the glory where you reign, clothed with the sun and crowned with the stars, you are, after Jesus, the joy and gladness of all the Angels and of all the Saints.

And from this earth, over which we tread as pilgrims, comforted by our faith in future resurrection, we look to you, our life, our sweetness and our hope; draw us onward with the sweetness of your voice that one day, after our exile, you may show us Jesus, the Blessed Fruit of your womb, O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Part Two

The Queenship

Live, our chaste love, the holy mirth
Of heav'n; the humble pride of earth.
Live, crown of women; Queen of men.
Live mistress of our song. And when
Our weak desires have done their best,
Sweet Angels come, and sing the rest.

—Richard Crasshaw

THE QUEENSHIP OF MARY AND AMERICA

by

FRANCIS CARDINAL SPELLMAN

CARDINAL SPELLMAN'S literary works cover almost as wide a range as his travels throughout the world. He has published theology, essays, poetry, and even a novel. Born in 1889 in Whitman, Mass., he was educated in the public schools of the district, Fordham University, and the North American College in Rome. Ordained in 1916, he was consecrated auxiliary bishop of Boston in 1932, and archbishop of New York in 1939. Pope Pius XII gave him the cardinal's hat in 1946.

Cardinal Spellman's books include *The Road to Victory*, *Action This Day*, *The Risen Soldier*, *The Foundling*, and *What America Means to Me*.

THE QUEENSHIP OF MARY AND AMERICA

by

FRANCIS CARDINAL SPELLMAN

CATHOLIC FAITH and piety know and love in the Blessed Virgin Mary the dignity of a Queen and the tenderness of a Mother. Mary, the mother of God, the mother of our Savior and our mother is the Queen of Heaven, Queen of Martyrs, and Queen of Peace. Every Catholic child as soon as he is able to say the words learns to repeat "Hail Holy Queen." To Our Lady of Victory in glory we joyfully chant during Eastertide "Queen of Heaven, Rejoice."

Mary's queenly quality is her share in the dignity of her Son, Christ, the King. Our Savior is our King, and our King is our Redeemer. Living in Mary, the House of Gold and Tabernacle of the Most High, Christ is King. Here He began His redemptive giving. This divine dynamism of love was consummated on the cross as the throne of Christ, the King. In the words of the Angelic Doctor: "Christ's priesthood and kingdom were consummated principally in His Passion."¹

Mary is Queen because she is the mother of the God-Man, Christ Our King, Shepherd and Savior. The union of God and man took place in the holy temple of Mary's virginal womb. Divinity was wrapped in Mary's immaculate flesh. Thus God in a singular manner appropriated His mother to Himself. How true to say that the Blessed Virgin is "gilt with Divinity, not that she is God but because she is the Mother of God." Realizing the most intimate nearness of Christ the King to His mother in His virginal birth, and the ineffable share Mary had in the salvific sufferings of her divine Son on Calvary, we immediately salute her as the Queen-Mother of the Savior and of men.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary, to whom our beloved reigning pontiff, Pope Pius XII, dedicated the human race, was pierced seven times by

swords of sorrow. These were the dolors of our Queen and Mother. The same Holy Father solemnly and infallibly declared the everlasting victory and glory of the Mother of Sorrows in the definition of Our Lady's bodily Assumption into the unending joy and peace of paradise. What comfort and courage the queenly triumph of their Mother will bring to the broken hearts of enslaved millions in a frightened world!

Significantly, an International Marian Congress was held in Rome during the week preceeding the solemn definition of the Assumption in 1950. The American writers who were privileged to represent their nation in the world-wide tribute to the Blessed Virgin Mary happily chose to discuss what the Church teaches on Our Lady's queenly prerogatives.

The Catholic Church in the United States is under the special patronage of the Immaculate Mother of God. The Immaculate Conception and the Assumption are two closely related mysteries. The mystery of the Assumption is the keynote of Catholic doctrine on Mary while the mystery of the Immaculate Conception is the foundation of this theological structure. We Americans who belong in a special manner to Our Lady as "The Immaculate Conception" rejoice exceedingly in the new honor we were permitted to give her when the Sovereign Pontiff defined that Mary's bodily Assumption into Heaven had been revealed by God as a truth to be believed by all men.

In our age of crisis and impending doom wisely do we turn to the woman boldly foretold in the first days of our race and beautifully depicted by St. John in his ecstatic apocalyptic vision. The Lord God cursed the serpent for all time, and the serpent's pride and power will be conquered by "the woman" and "her seed": "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel."² The serpent that would seduce, poison and paralyze the world once again lies in wait for the woman's heel. We lift our eyes, our minds and our hearts to the Lady, "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." By divine decree she will conquer that "great red dragon . . . that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world."³ And we hope to hear in our times

through the prayerful power of our Queen and Mother: "a loud voice in heaven, saying: Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ."⁴

Queen of Martyrs! Queen of Glory! Queen of Peace! Pray for us.

¹ Sum. theol., III, q. 35, a. 7, ad 1.

² Gen. 3:15.

³ Apoc. 12:1, 9.

⁴ Apoc. 12:10.

THE QUEENSHIP OF MARY
by
WILLIAM G. MOST

A PROFESSOR of Latin and Greek at Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa, Father Most's study of Mariology has been something of a sideline, yet his first Marian book, *Mary in Our Life*, won the Marian Library Medal as the outstanding Marian work of 1954.

Born in Dubuque in 1914, Father Most was ordained in 1940 and earned his Ph.D. from the Catholic University of America in 1946. Since that time he has been spiritual director of students, study club moderator, college professor, convent chaplain, and contributor to many Catholic periodicals and classical journals.

THE QUEENSHIP OF MARY

by

WILLIAM G. MOST

THE MOST recently established of Marian festal days, the beautiful feast of the Queen of Heaven, puts before us one of the most ancient titles of our Blessed Mother. As Pope Pius XII said in the *Ad Caeli Reginam*: "... from the first centuries of the Catholic Church, the Christian people have addressed humble prayers and songs of praise and devotion to the Queen of Heaven. . . ."¹

This fact is not at all surprising for the very first chapter of St. Luke's Gospel gives us a clear implication of her Queenship in the account of how the Archangel Gabriel told Mary that to her Son, the Lord God will give . . . the throne of David his Father, and he shall be king over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.² The first generations of Christians were not slow to conclude that if her Son is King forever by His very nature, then, in a superlative sense, Mary must be Queen. Hence it is that in the Catacombs of Priscilla there is a painting dating back to not long after the year 100 A.D., in which Our Lady is depicted presenting her Son to the adoring Magi, while she herself wears a headdress quite similar to that worn by the Empresses of that time.³

The Fathers of the Church at first chose to employ the name "Domina," a title which, at least when used in a suitable context, is best translated as "Sovereign Lady." Thus, in a homily attributed to Origen († 254) Elizabeth is represented as saying to Mary: "You are the Mother of my Lord: you are my Sovereign Lady. . . .";⁴ while the great Eastern Doctor, St. Ephrem († 373) whose beautiful poems on Mary and the Saints won for him the title of "Harp of the Holy Spirit,"⁵ spoke of

her as "Most Holy Sovereign Lady, Mother of God. . . Dwelling place of all graces."⁶

The Popes, too, joined in the acclamations of the Fathers. As early as the seventh century, we find Pope Martin I († 655) referring to Mary as "our glorious Sovereign Lady,"⁷ while only fifty years later, Pope John VII (705-07) caused a representation of Mary, wearing a royal crown, to be made in the old Vatican Basilica. The Pope himself was shown on her right, with the inscription: "John, an unworthy Bishop, made (this)."⁸ Similarly, Pope Adrian I (772-95) ordered that an image showing himself in the same attitude before Our Lady as an Empress be made in the Church of Santa Maria in Domenica.⁹

In our own day, Pope Pius XII has given to the Church several important statements on the Queenship of Mary. Outstanding among these are the *Bendito seja*,¹⁰ a radio message to Fatima, given on May 13, 1946, and the splendid new Encyclical Letter, the *Ad Caeli Reginam*,¹¹ of October 11, 1954. We shall examine briefly the dogmatic bases for Mary's Queenship as found in these two documents.

The title of Queen may be given either in a metaphorical or in a literal sense. In a metaphorical sense, it is given to those persons or things that possess some singular excellence, even though they have no actual royal power. In the *Ad Caeli Reginam*, Pope Pius XII takes pleasure in quoting the striking words of Pope Pius IX, to show how, in this respect, Mary deserves the title of Queen far more than all other creatures:

The unspeakable God . . . filled her, more than all angelic spirits and all the Saints, with an abundance of all heavenly gifts . . . so that she, always free from absolutely every stain of sin, and completely beautiful and perfect, presented such a fullness of innocence and holiness, that *none greater under God can be thought of, and no one, except God, can comprehend it.*¹²

Her surpassing holiness is, then, so lofty that no actually existing creature is capable of understanding it: only God Himself can comprehend it! The Latin of this last expression is especially powerful: "... which no

one, except God, can reach (even) in thought"! Therefore, if we urge our thoughts to ascend as high as they can, picturing to ourselves the most lofty heights of sanctity of which we can conceive—and then, even though we seem to have gone as far as we are able, we strive to ascend yet higher: we would still have to confess ourselves incapable of comprehending the holiness of Mary. For only God Himself can reach so high in His thoughts! St. Paul says rightly that the glory of even an ordinary soul in heaven is so great that, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love Him."¹³ What must be the dazzling glory of our Queen, who, as Pius XII said elsewhere, "more than all other creatures of God *combined* was filled with the divine Spirit of Jesus Christ."¹⁴ What must be the glory of her whose holiness is such that "no one except God can comprehend it"!¹⁵

But Mary's Queenship is not only one of excellence, surpassing though it be. In the strictest sense of the word, she possesses a royal power far greater than that of all the queens of the earth. In order to gain some understanding of this fact, it is necessary to examine the titles on which her royal power rests.

The two principal bases for Mary's Queenly power are her Divine Motherhood and her role of Co-redemptrix. Pope Pius XII stresses these two titles in the *Ad Caeli Reginam*:

... the most Blessed Virgin Mary is to be called Queen not only because of her Divine Motherhood, but also because she, by the will of God, had an outstanding part in the work of our eternal salvation.¹⁶

The fact that she is the Mother of God is Mary's greatest and most fundamental prerogative. By virtue of it, she is the Mother of Him who is King, as Pope Pius XI said, "by natural right."¹⁷ An ordinary Queen-mother merely brings forth a son who later, if all things go well, becomes king; while Mary's Son, as Pope Pius XII says: "... at the very moment at which He was conceived, because of the hypostatic union¹⁸ of (His) human nature with the Word, even as man was King and Lord of all things."¹⁹ For although the two natures, Divine and human, remain distinct in Our Lord, yet it is only the one Person, a Divine Person, to

whom both natures belong. Hence that God-man cannot be other than the most absolute King and Lord of all by His very nature. Mary is most truly the Mother, in fact, the *sole* human parent of that great King. To Him she is related by real consanguinity, in the first degree, and in the direct line. Hence her royalty lies on a plane far above that of all earthly sovereigns.

Mary's second title to royal power is mentioned in a brief but striking way in the *Bendito seja*. In it, the Holy Father draws a parallel between the Queenship of Mary and the Kingship of Christ:

Jesus is King throughout all eternity by nature and by right of conquest; through Him, with Him, and subordinate to Him, Mary is Queen by Grace, by divine relationship, by right of conquest, and by singular choice.^{20 21}

The reasons which the Holy Father gives for the Kingship of Christ are familiar and obvious: Jesus is King "by nature," in virtue of the hypostatic union, as we have already seen. He is King "by right of conquest" because He reconquered mankind from the captivity of Satan, in paying the price of our salvation. But then, after recalling that "through Him, with Him, and subordinate to Him" Mary is Queen "by grace," that is, because of her surpassing eminence of holiness, and "by divine relationship," that is, since she is the Mother of God,²² the Holy Father continues and adds that Mary is Queen "by right of conquest." If we apply here one of the most obvious rules of the interpretation of language, we shall see a remarkable truth. For when the *same* speaker repeats the *same* words in the *same* sentence, he should, unless he gives some other indication, mean them in the *same* sense. Here the Holy Father did add a restriction, saying that Mary is Queen only "through Him, with Him, and subordinate to Him." This fact of her subordination to Christ is obvious. But then, after showing how carefully he has chosen his words by making triply explicit even an obvious qualification, the Holy Father tells us that Mary is Queen "by right of conquest." The sense of his words is plain. In the case of Christ, the words "by right of conquest" can refer only to His work of paying the price of our Redemption on Calvary: in Mary's case, they must mean that "through Him, with Him, and subordinate to Him,"

she shared in paying that great price!²³ Hence she is, in the fullest sense of the word, our Co-redemptrix. We belong to Christ as His subjects because, as St. Paul says, He has "bought (us) at a great price."²⁴ Under Him, we belong also to Mary, because she shared with Him in the payment of that great price!

The *Ad Caeli Reginam* is of historic importance for many reasons. Not the least among these is the fact that in it for the first time a Pope has spoken at length on Mary's role as Co-redemptrix. A complete analysis²⁵ of the several long paragraphs which the Pope devotes to this topic would require many pages: we shall content ourselves with a brief survey of the more important points.

After telling us that Mary is Queen not only because of her Divine Motherhood, but also because of her "outstanding part in the work of our eternal salvation," the Holy Father quotes a passage from the Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on the Kingship of Christ. Christ is King, Pope Pius XI had said, not only by nature, but also because "He bought us with a great price." And then, while our minds are still occupied with the thought of that great price, Pope Pius XII continues:

Now in accomplishing *this* work of redemption, the most Blessed Virgin Mary was certainly intimately associated with Christ; rightly therefore do we sing in the Sacred Liturgy: "Holy Mary, the Queen . . . stood sorrowful by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."²⁶

Then, after quoting brief statements of Eadmer and Suarez on Mary's role in the Redemption, the Pope enters upon a long and complex train of thought, in which he develops this same idea:

. . . Mary, in obtaining spiritual salvation . . . was associated with Jesus Christ, the principle of salvation itself . . . in a way quite similar to that in which Eve was associated with Adam, the principle of death. . . .²⁷

To understand the force of this statement, we need to recall that although Eve was not the head of our race, and hence she alone could not have ruined us, yet she did, in her lesser way, co-operate with Adam, so that

she really did contribute to bringing down the anger of God upon the human race. Mary's role, says the Holy Father, was analogous to that of Eve: therefore she, in a subordinate way, shared in appeasing the anger of God, in paying the very price of our restoration.

Furthermore, this sharing of Mary's was not confined to the remote co-operation of the Divine Motherhood. For Eve's co-operation was in the very ruinous act itself. In order that the immediate character of Mary's share may not escape us, the Holy Father goes on, making more explicit how far this role of the New Eve extends:

... she ... always most intimately united with her Son, as the New Eve, offered Him on Golgotha, together with the holocaust of her Mother's rights and love.²⁸

Therefore, when the Eternal Father looked upon that terrible scene on Calvary, He saw *one* sacrifice in which *two* were sharing, though in different ways. One was the New Adam, who alone had the power to pay an adequate price for our Redemption. With Him was the New Eve. Her very ability to merit depended upon Him; yet she, in her lesser way, did what she could, offering her Son and herself with and through Him. The inexpressible generosity of God willed to accept her offering as forming an unneeded, but yet very pleasing part of that one great sacrifice, so that, by the goodness of God, His superabundant gift, and her lesser oblation fused, as it were, to form but one great price of our salvation. His Excellency, Archbishop Cicognani, Apostolic Delegate to the United States, expressed this thought very well when he said:

... she ... at the crucifixion ... for the salvation of humanity offered her Divine Son and herself as an oblation to God. The Lord accepted the offering and considered His Mother His helper in the work of Redemption.²⁹

On these two titles, therefore, the Divine Motherhood and the Co-redemption, the Holy Father rests the royal power of Mary:

... then, without a doubt, we can conclude that just as Christ, the New Adam, should be called King not only because He is the Son of God, but also because He is

our Redeemer, so, by a certain kind of analogy, the most Blessed Virgin is Queen not only because she is the Mother of God, but also because as the New Eve she was associated with the New Adam.³⁰

For Mary's two titles to Queenship are parallel to those for the Kingship of Christ: He is King because He is God; she is Queen because she is the Mother of God. He is King because He redeemed us; she is Queen because she shared with Him in redeeming us.

Since, then, Mary had shared so intimately in earning the life of grace for us, it is not strange that her Queenly powers should include the function of dispensing all graces:

... Mary ... as the Mother of Christ ... the associate in the work of the Divine Redeemer, and in His struggle with the enemy and in His victory gained over all, shares in the royal dignity ... from this association with Christ arises her royal power, by which she is able to dispense the treasures of the Kingdom of the Divine Redeemer.^{31 32}

To honor our heavenly Queen, the Holy Father instituted the beautiful new feast of the Queenship of Mary,³³ and commanded that each year on that day, the consecration to her Immaculate Heart be renewed. If we pause briefly to sketch the complete picture of Mary's role in the plans of God, we shall see better the reason for this action of the Holy Father.

For many years now, the Popes have been stressing the parallelism of Mary to Christ. For example, St. Pius X wrote of a "never dissociated manner of life and labors of the Son and the Mother,"³⁴ while Pope Pius XII spoke of her as "always sharing His lot."³⁵ For Mary was and is the constant, inseparable, subordinate associate of her Divine Son in all His works. "From the beginning and before the ages, He chose the Mother for His only-begotten Son";³⁶ she was promised immediately after the fall of our first parents, at the very time at which the Redeemer Himself was first foretold;³⁷ she conceived Him, she brought Him forth, she served as His instrument in bringing purifying grace to the Precursor of

Christ; she obtained that the divinely set hour be advanced at Cana; she joined in the great sacrifice on Golgotha, "so that one can truly affirm that together with Christ she has redeemed the human race."³⁸ She shared in His Resurrection and Ascension by way of her Assumption;³⁹ and now, as Queen of the Universe, she dispenses absolutely all the treasures of Heaven, for "her kingdom is as vast as that of her Son and God, since nothing is excluded from her dominion."⁴⁰ And even in the endless reaches of eternity, when the last of the elect shall have reached the blessed presence of God, Mary herself will continue to be a lesser, but yet very great source of joy to every soul that lives in the Heavenly Jerusalem.⁴¹

Her true role is then something staggering to think upon. God has given to her an *all-pervading role* in all His dealings with us. The logical consequence is easy to find: if we wish to imitate His ways as perfectly as possible,⁴² we will try to give her an equally all-pervading place in our personal spiritual lives. We shall do that best in the proportion in which we not only make but live out as fully as we can a generous consecration to our Heavenly Queen. And that is why the Holy Father commands that the consecration to her Immaculate Heart be renewed each year on that feast, hoping that all the children of Mary will not only be present at that solemn action, but will take part in it, ratify it in their hearts, and carry it out in their daily lives.

Finally, we remark that the consecration for which the Holy Father calls is to be made to the Immaculate Heart of Mary: it would seem as though he wished to remind us that although our Queen possesses a dignity so surpassingly great, yet her heart is always that of our loving Mother. Hence in the *Bendito seja* he wrote: "... her Queenship is essentially Motherly, exclusively beneficent."⁴³

¹ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (AAS) 46.625.

² Luke 1:32-33.

³ Cf. G. M. Roschini, O.S.M., *Mariologia* (2d ed., Roma, 1947) II, p. 430.

⁴ Cf. *Marian Studies* IV (1953) 87. In this passage, the sense of *Domina* is clearly "Sovereign Lady," since *Domina* is used in relation to *Dominus*: and *Dominus* in this passage, clearly has the strict sense.

⁵ Cf. F. Cayré, A.A., *Manual of Patrology* (tr. H. Howitt, Paris, 1936) I, 384.

⁶ Cf. *Marian Studies* IV, p. 87.

⁷ Cf. AAS 46.630.

⁸ Cf. *Marian Studies* IV, p. 39. The word "servant" is *servus* in the original. *Servus* could easily mean "slave." Cf. St. Louis de Montfort's "Holy Slavery."

⁹ Cf. *Marian Studies* IV, p. 40.

¹⁰ AAS 38.266.

¹¹ AAS 46.625-40, esp. pp. 633-37.

¹² AAS 46.636, citing Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, Dec. 8, 1854. (Italics mine).

¹³ I Cor. 2:9.

¹⁴ *Mystici Corporis*, June 29, 1943. AAS 35.247. Pius XII does not make clear at what point in Mary's life her holiness surpassed the combined final grace of all other creatures. A very large number of theologians favor the view that even her initial grace surpassed the final grace of all others combined. For Pius IX, in the *Ineffabilis Deus*, said that "from the beginning" God loved her "more than all creatures" and filled her with all graces more than all creatures. Probably he meant more than all combined, for he says that no greater holiness under God can be thought of—but if the combined holiness of all other creatures were greater, then we could easily think of a sanctity greater than hers.

If her initial grace did surpass the combined final grace of all then this dazzling holiness must have gone still higher, for during her whole life Mary always acted with the maximum generosity. (Her soul was full of grace at the start, but her capacity for grace could and did grow.) Since the growth of a soul is proportioned to its generosity, its capital of grace at the time, and God's generosity to it, her growth is staggering to think of!

¹⁵ Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, Dec. 8, 1854.

¹⁶ AAS 46.633.

¹⁷ Pius XI, *Quas primas*, Dec. 11, 1925, AAS 17.599.

¹⁸ "Hypostatic" is a term used to designate that unique union of two natures in one eternally pre-existing Divine Person.

¹⁹ AAS 46.633.

²⁰ AAS 38.266.

²¹ A person may have royalty by choice of the people. The ancient Jews rejected Jesus and Mary, but the Eternal Father chose them—and millions since gladly chose them.

²² Mary also has relations of affinity to the Father, with whom she shares the same Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as His ever faithful Spouse, who never failed in the least degree in following His every inspiration.

²³ A very small minority of theologians, in spite of numerous and clear papal texts (they say that the papal texts are not clear), still try to say that Mary did not really share immediately in the objective redemption, that is, that she did not share on Calvary itself in paying the price of our redemption by which mankind was *reconquered* from the captivity of Satan. The minority can avoid the obvious sense of the papal texts only by asking that we suppose that the Popes constantly have in mind some distinction, which they never express, never hint at, and which is so far from being obviously needed that most theologians never believe they should add it! The distinction they most frequently ask us to read in would say that Christ alone paid the price by which mankind was reconquered, but Mary merely merited that the fruits of the conquest be applied. Such a distinction is obviously out of place in the *Bendito seja* (as elsewhere). For it is one thing to *conquer*, quite another thing to merit merely that the fruits of the conquest be applied! Nor is there any reason to add any distinction at all in the *Bendito seja*: the Holy Father has been so careful as to make explicit even the ever obvious qualification that Mary is subordinate to Christ; hence we should not presume to read in something that is not obvious. (Actually, to the best of this writer's knowledge, the minority have not even tried to explain the *Bendito seja* text.) The *Ad Caeli Reginam* provides further evidence against the minority, as we shall see.

²⁴ I Cor. 6:20.

²⁵ For a more complete study of the *Ad Caeli Reginam* see *American Ecclesiastical Review* Sept. 1955, pp. 171-82, and *Marianum* XVII (1955) pp. 354-68.

²⁶ AAS 46.634 (emphasis added).

²⁷ AAS 46.634.

²⁸ AAS 46.635, citing from AAS 35.247. Neither the Fathers, nor the minority theologians (cf. n. 23 above) ever say that while Adam produced or acquired original sin, Eve merely earned its *application* to us. Hence, since the minority confine Mary's co-operation on Calvary to earning the *application* of grace, they should, logically, deny that she co-operated as the New Eve there! But, as we have seen, Pope Pius XII teaches that she did co-operate as the New Eve even on Calvary.

²⁹ Address given at the Marian Convocation, Nov. 16, 1954, at Catholic University of America: reported in *The Catholic University of America Bulletin*, Jan. 1955, p. 1.

³⁰ AAS 46.635.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² In this passage, as also in the analogy used above by the Holy Father, it is clear that when he speaks of Christ as Redeemer, he refers to Christ's work of paying the price of our Redemption. Hence, when

in this passage the Pope calls Mary the associate in the work of Christ, he must mean she was associated in that work of Christ of which he is speaking, i.e., the payment of the price of Redemption, not the application of the graces of Redemption (as the minority mentioned above, n. 23, would have to say). Further, her association is official, not private, for "as the New Eve, she offered Him."

³³ AAS 46.638.

³⁴ *Ad diem illum*, Feb. 2, 1904, ASS (*Acta Sanctae Sedis*) 36.453.

³⁵ *Munificentissimus Deus*, Nov. 1, 1950, AAS 42.768.

³⁶ Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*.

³⁷ In the *Fulgens Corona Gloriorum* (Sept. 8, 1953: AAS 45.579) Pius XII said that the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is contained in Genesis 3:15. If the Immaculate Conception is found in that text, surely Mary must be meant in it. Cf. Eric May, O.F.M.Cap., "Mary in the Old Testament" in *Mariology* (Milwaukee, 1955) I, p. 57 (ed. by Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M.).

³⁸ Benedict XV, *Inter Sodalicia*, March 22, 1918. AAS 10.182.

³⁹ Cf. Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, AAS 42.768: "... just as the glorious resurrection of Christ was an essential part and final sign of this victory, so also that struggle which was common to the Blessed Virgin and her Son had to be closed by the 'glorification' of her virginal body. . . ."

⁴⁰ Pius XII, *Bendito seja*, AAS 38.266.

⁴¹ Cf. Pius XII, to Italian Catholic Action Youth, Dec. 8, 1953 (quoted from *The Pope Speaks*, 1954, I, p. 38): "Surely, in the face of His own Mother, God has gathered together all the splendors of His divine artistry. . . . You know, beloved sons and daughters, how easily human beauty enraptures and exalts a kind heart. What would it ever do before the beauty of Mary. . . ! That is why Alighieri saw in Paradise in the midst of 'more than a million rejoicing Angels . . . a beauty smiling—what joy!—it was in the eyes of all the other saints'—Mary!"

⁴² Although in all souls devotion to Mary grows as they advance spiritually, yet this growing devotion takes in some a more explicit, constantly conscious, and intimate form than it does in others. The more thoroughly Marian forms of spirituality are objectively better, as being a closer imitation of the ways of God, who has given to her an all-pervading place in all His works. Yet not all receive the same graces: there is a providential difference in spiritual attractions. Cf. St. Louis de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*, #152.

⁴³ AAS 38.266.

QUEENLY TITLES OF OUR LADY

by

FATHER REGINALD GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, O.P.

FATHER GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE is one of the greatest living Dominican theologians and exponents of Thomism. Born in France in 1877, he has been engaged in teaching philosophy and theology since 1905, and is now professor of dogma and mystical theology in the Angelicum, Rome.

His first book, *Le Sens Commun*, an examination of the modernist position, was published in 1909. Since then he has published more than twenty other works, many of which have been translated into English.

"Queenly Titles of Our Lady" is a selection from the only completely Marian book written by Father Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life* (Herder, 1949).

QUEENLY TITLES OF OUR LADY

by

FATHER REGINALD GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, O.P.

MARY'S UNIVERSAL QUEENSHIP comes home to us in a more concrete form if we consider its different aspects as presented in the Litany of Loreto: Queen of angels, of patriarchs, of prophets, of apostles, of martyrs, of confessors, of virgins, of all the saints, of peace.

QUEEN OF ANGELS

Mary is Queen of the angels since her mission is higher than theirs. They are but servants, whereas she is the Mother of God. She is as much above them as the word "mother" surpasses the word "servant." She alone with the Father can say to Jesus: "Thou art my Son, I have begotten thee."

She is higher than the angels also by her fulness of grace and glory, which surpasses that of all the angels united. She is purer than they, for she has received purity for others as well as for herself. She was more perfect than they and more prompt in her obedience to God's commandments and in following His counsels. By her co-operation in the redemption she merited *de congruo* for the angels themselves the accidental graces by which they help us to save our souls and the joy which they experience in doing so.

As Justin of Miéchow well remarks,¹ if the angels have served Our Lord how much more did not Mary serve Him, she who conceived and bore Him, who cared for Him, who carried Him into Egypt to escape Herod's anger?

She surpasses the angels in this also, that they have each care of one soul or one community, but she is the guardian of all men and of each in particular. She is, more than they, the messenger of God who brought us not a created word but the Uncreated Word.

Archangels are appointed to protect this or that city: Mary protects all cities and all churches in them. Principalities are the custodians of provinces: Mary has the whole Church under her protection. Powers repel demons: Mary has crushed the serpent's head; she is terrible to the demons by the depth of her humility and the ardor of her charity. Virtues perform miracles as God's instruments: but the greatest miracle was to conceive the Incarnate Word for our salvation. Dominations command the lower angels: Mary commands all the heavenly choirs. The Thrones are those angels in whom God dwells in a specially intimate way: Mary, who gave birth to Jesus, is the Seat of Wisdom, and the Blessed Trinity resides in her more familiarly than in the highest angel—that is to say, in a way proportionate to her consummated grace.

She surpasses even the Cherubim and Seraphim. The Cherubim shine with the splendor of their knowledge: but Mary has penetrated deeper than they into the divine mysteries since she has the light of glory in a degree far above theirs. She has carried in her womb Him in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. She lived with Him for thirty years on earth, and in heaven she is nearest of all to Him.

The Seraphim burn with the flame of love: but more ardent still is the living flame of Mary's charity. She loves God more than all creatures together, for she loves Him not only as Creator and Father but as her Infant and her treasured Son.

She is therefore Queen of Angels. They serve her faithfully, surround her with veneration, marvel at her tender solicitude for each one of us and for the whole Church. Her charity, her zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls are the objects of their intense admiration.

QUEEN OF PATRIARCHS

The superiority of Mary to Adam in the state of innocence is clear from all that has been said thus far. She was higher in grace than he, and had as well the principal effects of original justice: subordination of the sensibility to the higher faculties, and subordination of these latter to God. Mary's charity was greater from the first instant of her conception than that of Adam in the state of innocence, and she had in addition the special grace of freedom from all sin however slight, even though she was conceived in passible and mortal flesh.

Her intimacy with God was much closer than that of Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Joseph. Abraham's most heroic act was that of preparing himself to immolate his son Isaac, the son of the promise. It was far more for Mary to offer Jesus Who was dearer to her than her own life: nor did an angel come to arrest Jesus' immolation as one did in the case of Isaac.

Her title of Mother of God, her charity and the heroicity of all her virtues make Mary shine as a star without compare among the patriarchs.

QUEEN OF PROPHETS

Prophecy in the strict sense of the term is the gift of knowing with certainty and predicting the future under divine inspiration. It was given to many in Old Testament times. In the New Testament, St. John and St. Paul were both prophets and apostles. Sacred Scripture tells us of certain holy women also who received the gift of prophecy: Mary, the sister of Moses, Deborah, Anne, mother of Samuel, Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist.

Mary is Queen of prophets. She foretold the future in the *Magnificat* when she sang: "Behold from henceforth all nations shall call me blessed." Of her the prophets spoke when they announced the mystery of the Incarnation. She bore in her womb Him of Whom the prophets spoke, and she heard from His own lips the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

She had the gift of prophecy in the highest degree after Our Blessed Lord, and at the same time she had perfect understanding of the fulness of the revelation which He communicated to the world.

QUEEN OF APOSTLES

In what sense is Mary Queen of the twelve Apostles?

Her dignity as Mother of God surpasses theirs. The apostolate is a form of ministry.² But according to the phrase of St. Albert the Great, Mary is not simply God's minister since as Mother of the Savior she is still more closely associated with Him. After the Ascension the Apostles had need of direction, of counsel, and no one was better equipped than Mary to give it to them. She consoled them in their grief at the departure of Our Lord when they felt lonely and

helpless in face of the task of evangelization of the pagan world. Jesus had left them His mother to help them. She was for them, it has been said, a second paraclete, a visible paraclete, a mediatrix: she was their guiding star in the midst of the tempest of persecution that raged about them. She was truly a mother to them. None of them ever left her side without having been enlightened and consoled, without having been strengthened. By her example in suffering calumnies, by her experience of the things of God she sustained them in times of trial and persecution.

There was no one who could talk as she did of the virginal conception of Christ, of His birth, His infancy, His hidden life, of what took place in His soul on the Cross. This is what prompted St. Ambrose to say: "It is not strange that St. John should have spoken better of the mystery of the Incarnation than the others did; he lived at the source of heavenly secrets."³ He lived in Mary's company what he speaks of in the fourth gospel.⁴

QUEEN OF MARTYRS

The title of Queen of Martyrs has been applied to Mary by SS. Ephrem, Jerome, Ildephonsus, Anselm and Bernard. The implied allusion is to her martyrdom of heart of which Simeon spoke: "Thy own soul a sword shall pierce."

Mary's grief was proportionate to her love for her Son. She suffered when He was called a seducer, a violator of the Law, one possessed by a devil; she suffered inexpressibly when Barabbas was preferred to Him, when He was nailed to the Cross, when He was tortured by the crown of thorns, when He was parched with thirst; she shared in all the anguish of His priestly and victim soul. She felt as it were all the blows Jesus received in His scourging and crucifixion, for her love made her one with Him. As Bossuet exclaims: "One cross was enough to make martyrs of Him and her." They offered but one sacrifice, and since she, for her part, loved Jesus more than herself, she suffered more than if she herself had been the victim. All this she endured so as to confess her faith in the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation, and in her the faith of the Church was strong at the moment, stronger and more ardent than in all the other martyrs.

We should remember that Mary's sufferings had the same cause as her Son's—the accumulated sins of men and their ingratitude which made the

sufferings to be partly of no avail. We must remember too that she suffered from the time of the conception of the Savior, still more after Simeon's prophecy, still more as she saw the opposition to Jesus mounting, and most of all at the foot of the Cross. But even then, even when her soul was inundated with grief, her zeal for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls caused her a holy joy at the sight of her Son consummating His redemptive work by the most perfect of holocausts.

Lastly, she has helped the martyrs in their torments. She is Our Lady of a happy death because of her care for the dying who call on her. Much more does she help those who die to profess their faith in the Redeemer.

QUEEN OF CONFESSORS

She is Queen of all who confess their faith in Jesus for she herself confessed the same faith more than any other creature.

But we shall speak principally in this section of what she is to the priests of Our Blessed Lord. To represent Jesus truly, the priest who brings Him down on the altar and offers Him sacramentally in Holy Mass should unite himself more and more to His sentiments, to the oblation which is always living in the Heart of Jesus, "always living to make intercession for us." In addition, he should, through the different sacraments, distribute the grace which is the fruit of the merits of Jesus and Mary.

Because of the work to which they are called, Mary is specially zealous for the sanctification of priests. She sees that they share in the priesthood of her Son and she watches over their souls that the grace of the ordination may bear fruit in them, that they become living images of the Savior. She protects them against the dangers which surround them and lifts them up if they happen to stumble. She loves them as sons of predilection, just as she loved St. John who was committed to her on Calvary. She attracts their hearts to herself to raise them up and to lead them to greater intimacy with Jesus, so that one day they may be able to say in all truth: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Mary helps priests in a special way at the altar so that they may become more fully conscious of their union with the Principal Offerer. She is

spiritually present at that sacramental oblation which perpetuates the substance of the sacrifice of the Cross, and she distributes to the priest the actual graces he needs to minister with recollection and in a spirit of self-donation. In that way she helps the priest to share in Jesus' victimhood as well as in His priesthood. All this means to form priests to the image of the Heart of Jesus.

With Jesus she arouses priestly vocations and cultivates them. She knows that where there are no priests there is no Baptism, no Confession, no Mass, no Christian Marriage, no Extreme Unction, no Christian life: without the priest the world returns to paganism.

Our Lord, Who has willed to have need of Mary in the work of salvation, has willed also to have need of priests, and Mary forms them in holiness. We can see her action clearly in some of the saints who were priests—St. John the Evangelist, St. Bernard, St. Dominic, the Apostle of the Rosary, St. Bernardine of Siena, St. Louis de Montfort, St. Alphonsus.

QUEEN OF VIRGINS

Mary is Queen of Virgins since she had the virtue of virginity in the most eminent degree and preserved it in the conception, birth, and after the birth of the Savior. She teaches souls the value of virginity. It is a true virtue, a spiritual force, something more than a mere good inclination of the sensibility. She teaches them that virginity consecrated to God is higher than simple chastity since it promises integrity of the body and purity of the heart for the whole of life—a consideration which led St. Thomas to say that virginity stands in much the same relation to chastity as munificence does to simple liberality, since it is a perfect gift of self, and sign of a perfect generosity.

Mary safeguards virgins from danger, she supports them in their difficulties and leads them, if they are faithful, to great intimacy with her Son.

What is her role in regard to consecrated souls? The Church calls such souls "Spouses of Christ." It follows that Our Lady is their perfect model. Following her example they should live a life of prayer and of reparation in union with Our Blessed Lord. They should become also consolers of the afflicted, remembering that the consolation which they

afford in a supernatural spirit to the suffering members of Christ is afforded to Himself and makes amends for the ingratitude, coldness, and even hatred of so many. Thus, these souls are called to reproduce the virtues of Mary and to continue in some measure her work for Our Blessed Lord and for souls.

If consecrated souls but know and follow Mary's guidance they find through her a wonderful compensation for the privations their lives impose on them, and which, though all accepted in advance, are felt most keenly only as they come one by one, day after day. Through Mary they can aspire to a certain spiritual motherhood, which is an image of her own, in regard to all—the poor, the afflicted, sinners—who are in need of spiritual care. Our Blessed Lord alluded to that spiritual motherhood when He said: "I was hungry, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you covered me; sick, and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me."⁵

Spiritual motherhood in the life of contemplation and reparation may be practiced also by the apostolate of prayer and suffering which makes fruitful the exterior apostolate for the conversion of sinners and the extension of the reign of Christ. A hidden, interior apostolate can be one of great sufferings; but Our Lady will show how to bear them and she will afford some glimpse of their effects in souls.

Another work of Mary's is to help Christian mothers bring up their children to a life of faith, confidence in God, and love. She helps them also to win back their erring children, as St. Monica did St. Augustine.

Thus, we see the universality of Mary's Queenship. She is Queen of all the saints by virtue of her unique mission in God's providential plan, and her fulness of grace and glory. She is Queen of all the saints, the unknown as well as the known, the uncanonized as well as the canonized, the Queen of all those who strive after holiness on earth, whose trials and joys are so well known to her, and the crown of whose merits she foresees even now.

¹ Collationes: circa invocationem: Regina angelorum.

² "Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ" (I Cor. 4:1).

³ De Institutione Virginis, c. ix.

⁴ These remarks are a summary of the corresponding section of Justin de Miéchow's work.

⁵ Matt. 25:35-36.

QUEEN OF APOSTLES

by

THOMAS A. STANLEY, S.M.

FATHER STANLEY was born in Cleveland in 1921, and studied at the University of Dayton and the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. His doctoral dissertation in theology was *The Mystical Body of Christ according to the Writings of Father William Joseph Chaminade*.

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QUEEN OF APOSTLES

by

THOMAS A. STANLEY, S.M.

ONE OF THE MOST baffling and, sometimes, most aggravating aspects of God's design for the conversion and sanctification of men is the fact that He has chosen to engage weak, sinful men in this task—in fact, He has confided its accomplishment to them.

The fullest and most universal of commissions to carry out the work of Christ was that given to the Apostles of Our Lord. "All power in heaven and on earth has been given me," He told them. "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days even unto the consummation of the world."¹ These men in turn had successors, the Bishops of the Church, who by their consecration were entrusted with the same task within the area assigned them. Almost immediately, the burden of their responsibility grew so large that they associated with themselves still others, priests and teachers, in the fulfillment of this all-important work. These are apostles in the strict sense of the word, but in a still wider sense every person enjoying the true Faith is involved in the *apostolate*, for, as the parable of the talents teaches, the gifts of God are meant to be multiplied, and the Faith is God's greatest gift to any individual.

At each of these levels you will find in varying degrees the essential elements that go to make an apostle. These elements are best derived from Christ's commission to His twelve Apostles, "As the Father has sent me, I also send you."² Evidently, then, there are two fundamental parts to the notion, *apostle*. He is someone (1) *sent* by Christ (2) *to continue the mission* of Christ.

This mission, which was given to the Apostles and in which all Christians to a degree participate, is to possess and to give Jesus Christ, to form Christ in souls where He is not, and to perfect this life of Christ in souls where He already dwells in grace. It is simply the continuation among men of the work of the Redemption, the establishment of the whole human race under the Kingship of Christ, "to restore all things in Christ," as St. Pius X reminded himself in his motto.

And Mary, the Mother of God, is Queen of all apostles.

What does it mean exactly, to be Queen? There are two possible meanings for the word. It can signify a certain dignity or eminence. Understood in this sense it is applied to one who excels in a certain field of endeavor. Thus we say of a woman that she is Queen of Ballet or Queen of some sport. It can also signify a certain association with government or rule, as it does in the terms Queen of England or Queen of Greece. Mary is Queen of the Apostles in both senses.

She is Queen, first of all, because of the superiority and universality of her apostolic mission. Her mission was to be the Mother of Christ, and thus "from the royal dignity of her Son, she has obtained eminence and outstanding position."³ By this intimate tie of motherhood she is Queen of all over which He is King.

But Mary was chosen to be Christ's Mother according to a certain plan, a plan which, as God revealed it to us, shows Mary to be intimately involved in the total work of Christ. "Just as Christ the new Adam must be called King, not only because He is Son of God, but also because He is our Redeemer, so, by a certain kind of analogy, the most Blessed Virgin is Queen, not only because she is the Mother of God, but also because, as the new Eve, she was associated with the new Adam."⁴

To be an apostle, we saw, is to be *sent* by Christ to "*re-incarnate*" and "*bring up*" Christ in souls. Mary *was chosen* by God to be the Mother of God, and by that fact to be the spiritual mother of men. She was to be the instrument of the Incarnation and thereby the instrument of the "*re-incarnation*" and "*growing up*" of Christ in the souls of the members of the Mystical Body of Christ. By the design of God, it is Mary that gives birth to Christ in souls and who sees to it that this life of Christ in the soul is nourished and grows to fulness just as she watched over and cared for Christ Himself after His birth.

Hence, as the new Eve, Mary's mission to work with Christ to save souls is not limited as it is in the case of other apostles, but extends to all times and all places. It is universal. Moreover, Mary's mission, compared with that of other apostles, involves a degree of intimacy, directness and power that surpasses theirs. Theirs is only a participation in the apostolate of Mary. Hence, as far as dignity and eminence go, Mary is truly Queen of Apostles.

But Mary is also Queen of Apostles because of her commanding role in the apostolate, because she shares the rule of Christ over souls and over all apostles. In the words of Pope Pius XII, "the sovereign King has in some way communicated His power of ruling to her."⁵

The exact way in which Mary shares the rule of Christ is still being discussed by the theologians of the Church. Generally, they distinguish three possible ways a woman can be Queen. The first is to be Queen in the manner of a King, that is, a sort of she-king. Such a Queen holds the royal power exclusively and in all its fulness. Where such a Queen exists, there is no King, there is no room for any other sovereign because she holds the ruling power completely and exercises it directly.

Evidently, Mary could never be this type of Queen, for such a Queenship would necessarily exclude the Kingship of Christ—a situation that is impossible. Mary's power, whatever it is, is derived from Christ, secondary to His and dependent on Him.

A second kind of Queenship, that known as the Queen Motherhood, is conferred on a woman who is mother of the King. At first this would seem to fit the case of Mary perfectly: She is mother of the King, hence a Queen Mother. But a closer look at the implications indicate the impossibility of such a title for Mary, for in the Queen Mother-King relationship, the Queen is generally Queen *before* the King is King, and the King is King because he is son of this particular woman. But Mary is not Queen until she becomes the Mother of the King, nor is Christ King because He is the son of Mary. He is King because He is the Son of God and because He is Victor over the enemies of God. Such a relationship would imply that Christ is dependent on Mary for His title of King—an utter impossibility. Moreover, the title, Queen Mother, is usually a title of mere honor. The Queen Mother-King relationship does not of itself involve any exercise of power on the part of the Queen

Mother, and hence does not at all express Mary's share in the rule of Christ.

There is a third possibility, that of being Queen as a woman. Ordinarily such a Queen is known as a Queen Consort. She derives her position and her power from her very intimate union with the King, a sort of oneness with Him that enables the two of them to think and feel alike. This oneness gives her not only a special eminence, but also a special power of intercession and influence. It is such a Queenship that Mary enjoys.

Mary has achieved a oneness and intimacy of mind and heart with her Son surpassing that of all other creatures united. And it is this oneness with Christ that is the measure of her Queenly power.

She is one with Him in mind. "Christ made the Apostles 'know all things that He had learned from His Father,' that is, absolutely everything they should have known as the transmitters of His revelation and as the builders of His Mystical Body. To all in heaven He makes known all things that pertain to them (*Summa*, III, q. 10, a.2). To Mary, then, he makes known *all things* which pertain to the salvation of all men; for the salvation of all is her concern."⁶

She is one with Him in will. Her answer to God at Nazareth when when she was asked to be the Mother of God, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to thy word,"⁷ is the beautiful expression of a lifelong conformity of wills—a conformity that grew ever more intimate as she became more "one" with Christ, for this "oneness" is predicated on such a union of wills.

This oneness with Christ determines the manner of Mary's Queenship; it gives rise to a power of intercession and influence whereby she becomes Distributress of all the graces she cooperated in winning with Christ on Calvary. It is this power which constitutes Mary as commander-in-chief of all apostles, which makes her their Queen. It is through this power that she fulfills the prophecy made in the garden of Eden to the serpent, "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel."⁸

In his book, *Soul of the Apostolate*, Dom Chautard mentions a sixth century Byzantine painting that expresses graphically what we are trying to say. He says:

The figure of Our Blessed Lady is shown carrying in

her bosom that Incarnate Word surrounded by a circle of light. Like the eternal Father, she ever keeps within herself the Word she has given to the world. As Rohault de Fleury said, "The Savior shines in the midst of her breast like the Eucharist with all the veils torn away." Jesus lives in her. He is her heart, her life-breath, her center, and her life: this is the image of the interior life.

But the Divine Child is there carrying out the work of His apostolate. His attitude, the scroll of His Gospel, which He holds in His left hand, the gesture of His right hand, His expression, everything shows clearly that He is teaching. And the Blessed Virgin is united to His word. The expression on her face seems to tell us that she too would like to say something. Her wide-open eyes are looking for souls to whom she may communicate her Son: and that represents the active life of preaching and instruction.

Her hands, outstretched like those of the *orantes*, or praying women, depicted on the walls of the Catacombs, or of the Priest offering the Holy Victim, tell us that it is above all by prayer and union to the sacrifice of Christ that our interior life will have depth and our apostolate fecundity.

She lives in Jesus, through Jesus, by His life, His love, and by union with His Sacrifice; and Jesus speaks in her and through her. Jesus is her life, and she is the Word-carrier, she amplifies His voice, she serves as His monstrance.⁹

Every apostle in meditation on Christ's commission to the first Apostles, "As the Father sent me, I also send you,"¹⁰ ought to note well the

correlatives "as" and "also." These indicate that they are being sent not only for the same purpose as Christ, but also in the same manner, in the same way that Christ was sent. Now Christ was sent to accomplish His task with Mary at His side as His associate in all that He did. So too with the apostle; he must work in cooperation with Mary.

In so far as an apostle re-establishes in his life a relationship with Mary that resembles and imitates the relationship between Christ and Mary, he will to the same extent place himself under the leadership of Mary and make his work effective. For Mary's leadership is not that of one who commands as a King. She leads as a woman, the Woman of Genesis and the Woman of the Apocalypse, who because of her "oneness" with Christ knows His plans for souls, wills them as He does, and accomplishes them through the disbursement of His graces. It is thus that she commands; it is thus that she is Queen of Apostles.

¹ Matt. 28:18-20.

² John 20:21.

³ Pius XII, *Ad Caeli Reginam*.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Mullaney, O.P., "Queen of Mercy," *American Ecclesiastical Review*, August 1952, p. 119.

⁷ Luke 1:38.

⁸ Gen. 3:15.

⁹ Dom Chautard, *Soul of the Apostolate*, pp. 283-4.

¹⁰ John 20:21.

PIUS XII AND THE QUEENSHIP

by

EAMON R. CARROLL, O.CARM.

FATHER CARROLL was born in Chicago in 1921. He was ordained a Carmelite priest in 1946, and received his doctorate in sacred theology from the Gregorianum University, Rome, in 1951. Until 1955 he was professor in the International Carmelite College of St. Albert in Rome, and head of the Mariological section of the Institute for Carmelite Studies. He is now professor of Mariology at the Carmelite theologate, Whitefriars Hall, Washington, D.C., and director of the Marian Institute at the Catholic University of America.

Father Carroll has contributed studies to *Mariology* (vol. 1), edited by J. B. Carol, O.F.M., and *Marian Studies*, vol. 4 and vol. 7. In 1957 he was elected president of the Mariological Society of America.

PIUS XII AND THE QUEENSHIP

by

EAMON R. CARROLL, O.CARM.

“**W**ITH legitimate filial pride we wish to exalt your queenship and to recognize it as due to the sovereign excellence of your entire being, O most sweet, most true Mother of Him who is King by right, by inheritance and by conquest.” Pope Pius XII pronounced these words on November 1, 1954, on the occasion of the solemn crowning of Our Lady’s picture at St. Peter’s Basilica.¹ No pope in the history of the Church has spoken so often about our Blessed Mother’s royal power as has Pope Pius XII. Not only did divine providence choose him to define the truth of Mary’s glorious Assumption, not only did he consecrate the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother and Queen, but from the beginning of his pontificate he has taught Mary’s queenly association with Christ the King.

It was “to climax all these manifestations of Our love for the great Mother of God”² that the pope wrote his encyclical on the queenship, *Ad Caeli Reginam*, October 11, 1954, and therein declared a new liturgical feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Queen. The encyclical and the new feast of Mary’s queenship are the finishing touches on the portrait Pope Pius XII has given us of Mary, our Queen and Mother.

FIRST MASS

On April 3, 1899, Fr. Eugene Pacelli offered his First Mass in the Roman basilica of St. Mary Major. The great mosaic in the apse of St. Mary Major shows Jesus and Mary sitting side by side on royal thrones, each wearing a crown. The young priest was not to forget his impression of Mary’s queenship on his First Mass day. On December 8, 1939, as Vicar of Christ, he returned to St. Mary Major to celebrate the fortieth

anniversary year of his ordination. In his sermon he described the Marian basilica as "the maternal court where the great Queen of heaven and earth exercises her merciful rule and sweet command, reconciling sinners with God and dispensing her assistance."³

CARDINAL PACELLI

When Bishop Ange-Marie Hiral, O.F.M., dedicated his cathedral at Port Said and his whole vicariate to "Mary, Queen of the World," Cardinal Pacelli was instrumental in having Pope Pius XI send a crown of precious stones for the statue of Our Lady. Cardinal Dougherty, papal legate enroute to the Manila Eucharistic Congress, stopped at Port Said on January 13, 1937, to consecrate the cathedral. At the same time permission was granted to the vicariate to add "Mary, Queen of the World" to the Litany of Loreto.

As legate of Pope Pius XI to Lourdes, April 28, 1935, Cardinal Pacelli preached of the "Mother of the eternal priest Jesus Christ, who on the bloody mount of Golgotha shared intimately in the sacrifice and became the Queen of martyrs and of priests."⁴

MARY, QUEEN OF POPES

In his office as supreme pontiff, Pope Pius XII realizes that Our Lady is "raised above Peter, Vicar of Christ on earth" and "has in common with Peter, in a way all her own, a dignity, an authority, a rule which make her Queen to the College of the Apostles."⁵

QUEEN OF PEACE

On his first Christmas as pope, 1939, the Holy Father urged a world again at war to turn to the Prince of Peace, and to the Mirror of Justice and Queen of Peace.⁶ In an address to pilgrims, April 21, 1940, he spoke of the "august Sovereign of the Church militant, suffering, and triumphant . . . Queen of the Saints . . . Queen of peace and of mercy" and of Mary's "power over the Heart of God."⁷ In a letter of April 15, 1942, asking public prayer for the month of May the Pope stresses Our Lady's power for peace: "As everyone well knows, just as Jesus Christ is King of all, the Lord of Lords, in whose hands are placed the fortunes

of individual citizens and peoples, so His dear Mother Mary is honored as 'Queen of the world' by all the faithful, and is our most powerful advocate with God." Our Lord "decrees for his heavenly Mother all the glory, power and majesty of his kingdom."⁸

CONSECRATION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART

Previous to the encyclical of October 11, 1954, the most significant statements of Pope Pius XII about Our Lady's queenship were connected with his consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This great event took place in 1942 at the close of a radio address to Fatima. And it was at the solemn crowning of the miraculous image of Our Lady at Fatima in 1946 that the pope sent the radio message that he has often recalled as his "message of Mary's royal dignity."

On October 31, 1942, the Holy Father, not only as Head of the Church, but "in the role of representative of the human race which Christ redeemed"⁹ read the prayer of consecration: "As the Church and the entire human race were consecrated to the heart of thy Jesus that through hope in him he might become for all the sign and pledge of victory and salvation, so we in like manner consecrate ourselves forever to thee and to thy Immaculate Heart, O Mother and Queen of the world, so that thy love and protection may hasten the triumph of God's kingdom."¹⁰

There are many indications that the message of Fatima moved the pope to choose the 25th anniversary of the apparitions (1917-1942) as the occasion of consecrating the world to the Immaculate Heart. Moreover Pope Pius XII has shown how traditional Marian devotions like the rosary and the scapular are perfect expressions of consecration to the Immaculate Heart. These are in fact the practices requested by the Virgin of Fatima, together with works of penance. The formula of consecration of October 31, 1942 begins with the words: "Queen of the most holy Rosary, Help of Christians. . ."

On October 13, 1917, the Blessed Virgin appeared as Our Lady of the Rosary, then showed herself successively with the other members of the Holy Family, as Our Lady of Sorrows, and finally in majesty as Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. Commentators identify this triple representation as corresponding to the joyful, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries of the rosary. In his letter concerning the seventh centenary of the brown

scapular (1251-1951) the Holy Father seems to have had in mind this glorious last apparition of October 13, 1917, for he urges all to wear the scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel as a "sign of their consecration to the most Sacred Heart of the Immaculate Virgin, which We have so strongly recommended in recent times."¹¹

IMMACULATE HEART AND NEW FEAST OF QUEENSHIP

Consecration to the Immaculate Heart is a practical recognition of Our Blessed Mother's queenship. Pope Pius XII has linked consecration to Mary's Immaculate Heart and her queenship in the same way that Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI made consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus a public recognition of the kingship of Christ. When Pope Pius XI gave the Church the feast of Christ the King in 1925, he ordered that Pope Leo XIII's act of consecration to the Sacred Heart be renewed annually on this occasion. In granting the new feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Queen, to be kept on May 31, Pope Pius XII commanded the renewal on this day of the consecration of mankind to the Immaculate Heart. He said further: "On this consecration rest our great hopes of the dawn of a happy era brightened by the triumph of religion and of Christian peace."¹²

POPE'S DOCTRINAL TEACHING ON QUEENSHIP

On May 13, 1946, as his legate, Cardinal Masella, solemnly crowned the image of Our Lady of Fatima, the pope gave his radio address on Mary's queenship, explaining at length the true and perfect power of queen possessed by the Mother of God in her Son's kingdom. The address of 1946 together with the recent encyclical of October 11, 1954, present a strikingly complete doctrinal picture of the queenship. Just as Christ has both a native right and an acquired title to kingship, in that He is Son of God and has conquered by His suffering and death, so Mary has also two titles to queenship: she is Mother of God, and she was associated with her Son in the work of Redemption.¹³ In the encyclical of October, 1954, the pope, while emphasizing the divine maternity as the *main ground* for Mary's queenship, also insisted that Our Lady is queen "not only because she is the Mother of God, but also because it was God's will that she should play a unique part in the work of our

eternal salvation. . . . It may also be said that this glorious Sovereign Lady was chosen to be the Mother of God 'precisely for the purpose of making her a partner in the Redemption of the human race' (the quotation is from Pius XI, *Auspicatus profecto*, in AAS 25 (1933) 80)."¹⁴ Just as Christ, the new Adam, is King both as Son of God and as our Redeemer, so also in an analogous fashion, Mary, the new Eve, is Queen both as Mother of God and as the associate of the Redeemer.

Having been associated with the King of martyrs in the ineffable work of human Redemption as Mother and co-operatrix, she remains forever associated with him, with an almost unlimited power in the distribution of graces which flow from the Redemption. Jesus is King throughout all eternity by nature and by right of conquest; through him, with him, and subordinate to him, Mary is Queen by grace, by divine relationship, by right of conquest, and by singular election.¹⁵

SOCIAL NATURE OF MARY'S QUEENSHIP

In consecrating the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother and Queen, the pope has recognized the social nature of Mary's queenship. "Her kingdom is as vast as that of her Son and God since nothing is excluded from her dominion."¹⁶ The pope has preached the queenship of Our Lady to all the world, recommending to all countries national consecration to the Immaculate Heart, and himself consecrating the peoples of Russia to the Immaculate Heart on July 7, 1952.¹⁷

During the Marian Year Our Lady's queenship was recognized the world over by Marian congresses and by coronations of her images. The supreme pastor sent messages for many of these events, teaching over and over the true queenship of Our Blessed Mother, pointing out that her reign is one of mercy, that the powerful queen of all graces is the spiritual mother of mankind. "The Virgin Mary, Mother of God, reigns with a mother's love over the whole world."¹⁸

It is hard to imagine an occasion or walk of life for which the Holy Father has not invoked Mary's help as Queen. During and after the

second World War he has constantly turned to Mary Queen and mediatrix of peace. In the encyclical on the Mystical Body, he speaks of the "true Queen of martyrs."¹⁹ At the liberation of Rome, June, 1944, the pope prayed for the help of the "Mother of Divine Love and Queen of sorrows."²⁰

Addressing the bishops of the United States on the reopening of the North American College in Rome, he spoke of "our heavenly Mother, Queen of the clergy" and of "students nurtured in tender love of their Mother and Queen, developed in the image of her divine Son."²¹ To those engaged in apostolic works the pope has spoken of the "Queen, Mother and inspirer of the Apostles," of the "Queen of the Apostles and of the Cenacle."²²

Catholics in many lands have heard the pope declare Our Lady the queen of their countries. She is the "Immaculate Queen and patroness of Brazil,"²³ "Virgin of Carmel, Queen of Chile,"²⁴ "Queen of the people of Venezuela,"²⁵ "the Virgin of Carmel, Queen of Colombia."²⁶

Commending suffering China to the Virgin Mother of God, Queen of China, the pope wrote, in a context that seems to refer to the Legion of Mary: "May she . . . grant strength . . . to those among you, who in the membership of a peaceful association, have consecrated themselves to her service and glory in her name."²⁷ In his address of November 1, 1954, the Holy Father repeats this thought: "Mary's queenship is most appropriately symbolized by the 'acies ordinata'—the army set in battle array—yet no one will therefore conceive of any warlike intentions, but only of that strength of mind which we admire in Our Lady to an heroic degree."²⁸

In his sermons on the work of women at home and in the world the pope has spoken of the "Mother most admirable, the Queen of Mothers,"²⁹ of "the merciful Queen and Mother" of the Cana wedding feast,³⁰ of "our sovereign Queen and Mother, Our Lady of Nazareth."³¹ Speaking of vocations fostered in good homes the pope notes that the "Queen of virgins awakens the desire to imitate the perfection of her love for Christ and men."³²

In his radio message to the Mexican Marian Congress, October 12, 1945, the Holy Father calls the most holy Virgin God's providential instrument to give to the world His beloved Son, "Mother and Queen

of the Apostles who were to spread his doctrine to the whole world."³³ Addressing Our Lady directly, he commends to her powerful patronage "the purity and integrity of the holy faith in Mexico and the whole American continent."

In 1947 the pope canonized two great apostles of Our Lady's queenship: St. Louis Grignon de Montfort and St. Catherine Labouré.

For the Holy Year the pope asked God's blessing "to make of it, with the motherly help of Mary Queen of the world, a year of increased faith, of superabundant grace."³⁴ During the Holy Year His Holiness defined the dogma of the Assumption. *Munificentissimus Deus*, the document of the definition, has a number of references to the queenship, such as this one: "Like her Son before her, she conquered death and was raised body and soul to the glory of heaven where, as Queen, she sits in splendor at the right hand of her Son, the immortal King of the ages."³⁵ In honor of the Assumption, Our Lady's Litany has been enriched by the title "Queen assumed into heaven."

The Marian Year proposed to men the example of the "Queen of martyrs" and presented as a pattern of peace "prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary, that she, who brought forth the Prince of Peace, will be our advocate . . . in promoting a covenant of friendship among men."³⁶ *Ad Caeli Reginam*, October 11, 1954, renews the hope that the Queen and Mother of the Christian people will bring peace to a world cleansed of hate, and after this exile show us her Son Jesus.³⁷

HOPES OF POPE PIUS XII

The kind of recognition of Mary's queenship that Pope Pius XII desires, his hope in granting the new feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Queen, is that Our Blessed Mother will "reign over men's minds, that they may seek only what is true; over their wills, that they may follow solely what is good; over their hearts, that they may love nothing but what you yourself love."³⁸ Our Queen and Mother is the Seat of Wisdom. It is her royal counsel to show us the path of holiness. She guides us that we may never stray from it, that we may always imitate her complete dedication of herself to Jesus Christ and His kingdom.

The Holy Father concluded his homily on the queenship, November 1, 1954, with these words: "Obtain for us that all who now in every

corner of the world acclaim and hail you Queen and Lady, may one day in heaven enjoy the fullness of your kingdom in the vision of your Divine Son, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth for ever and ever."⁸⁹

NOTE:

DR stands for *Discorsi e radiomessaggi di Sua Santità Pio XII*, I-VII, Milano, 1941-1947; VIII-XVI, Città del Vaticano, 1947-1955. OssRom stands for *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican daily paper.

My grateful thanks are extended to all the translators whose work I have adopted or adapted for the papal texts: the magazines *The Pope Speaks* and *Catholic Documents*, the publications of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the English Catholic Truth Society, the Irish Messenger Office, America Press, and others.

¹ *Le testimonianze* in AAS 46 (1954) 662.

² *Ad caeli Reginam* in AAS 46 (1954) 625-640; this reference 627.

³ *Magnas tibi agimus* in AAS 31 (1939) 706-708.

⁴ *Discorsi e panegirici 1931-1935*, Milano, 1936, p. 408.

⁵ *Questa viva corona*, April 21, 1940, in DR 2 (1940-1941) 79-87.

⁶ *In questo giorno*, December 24, 1939, in AAS 32 (1940) 12.

⁷ *Questa viva corona*, in DR 2 (1940-1941) 79-87.

⁸ *Dum saeculum* in AAS 34 (1942) 125-127.

⁹ Encyclical *Auspicia quaedam*, May 1, 1948, in AAS 40 (1948) 171.

¹⁰ AAS 34 (1942) 345-346.

¹¹ *Neminem profecto latet*, February 11, 1950, in AAS 42 (1950) 391.

¹² AAS 46 (1954) 638.

¹³ *Bendito seja*, May 13, 1946, in AAS 38 (1946) 264-267.

¹⁴ AAS 46 (1954) 633-634.

¹⁵ *Bendito seja* in AAS 38 (1946) 266.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Sacro vergente anno* in AAS 44 (1952) 505.

¹⁸ *Ad caeli Reginam* in AAS 46 (1954) 625.

¹⁹ *Mystici corporis*, June 29, 1943, in AAS 35 (1943) 248.

²⁰ *Mai forse*, June 11, 1944, in DR 6 (1944-1945) 35-40.

²¹ *The approachnig re-establishment*, February 18, 1948, in AAS 40 (1948) 108-110.

²² *Con lieta gratitudine*, May 6, 1951, in DR 13 (1951-1952) 77; *Il est impossible*, November 5, 1951, in DR 13 (1951-1952) 359.

²³ *Embora já ai presente*, September 7, 1954 in OssRom, 8 Sep. 1954.

²⁴ *Cual simbolo*, December 29, 1951, in DR 13 (1951-1952) 439.

²⁵ *Si siempre fué*, September 12, 1952, in AAS 44 (1952) 739.

²⁶ *Entre los primeros albores*, July 19, 1946, in AAS 38 (1946) 324.

²⁷ *Cupimus imprimis*, January 18, 1952, in DR 13 (1951-1952) 555.

²⁸ *Le testimonianze*, in AAS 46 (1954) 664.

²⁹ *Questa grande vostra adunata*, October 21, 1945, in AAS 37 (1945) 284-295.

³⁰ From an address to the thirteenth Congress of the World Union of Organizations of Catholic Women, quoted from *Catholic Documents*, no. VII, July 1952, p. 31. Address was given April 24, 1952.

³¹ Radio-address of August 15, 1953 for the close of a Brazilian Eucharistic Congress, quoted from *Catholic Documents*, no. XIV, February 1954, p. 4.

³² *Depuis le 8 décembre*, September 5, 1954, in OssRom, 6-7 Sep. 1954.

³³ *Venerables Hermanos* in AAS 37 (1945) 265-267.

³⁴ *Siano rese umili*, May 26, 1949, in OssRom, 27-28 May 1949.

³⁵ AAS 42 (1950) 768.

³⁶ *Fulgens corona*, September 15, 1953, in AAS 45 (1953) 591.

³⁷ AAS 46 (1954) 640.

³⁸ *Le testimonianze*, in AAS 46 (1954) 665.

³⁹ AAS 46 (1954) 666.

MORE MOTHER THAN QUEEN

by

MARIE-MICHEL PHILIPON, O.P.

"NOT, perhaps, since the time of the saintly monk and abbot, Dom Marmion . . . has there appeared on the spiritual horizon a writer of Father Philipon's special merit, blending as he does so happily the highest theological doctrine with the widest practical appeal." This appraisal of the work of the French Dominican theologian was made by Rev. John A. Otto, who has translated into English many of the books of Father Philipon, including *The Eternal Purpose* (Newman, 1952), *The Mother of God* (Newman, 1953), and *The Sacraments and Christian Life* (Newman, 1954).

Father Philipon was born in 1898. He is a professor at the École de Théologie, Saint Maximum (Var), and is a member of the Société Française d'Études Mariales.

MORE MOTHER THAN QUEEN

by

MARIE-MICHEL PHILIPON, O.P.

MARY is associated with Christ and the Blessed Trinity in the acquisition and distribution of all graces. But Mary plays a part in yet another aspect of the Trinitarian life, namely, in the governance of the world. The Blessed Trinity governs the world, but not without Mary. At first, we may find this thought surprising, but it is nonetheless true. It is a truth that follows from the fact that Mary is associated with Christ in all of His activity.

In considering the activity of Christ, we must include His governing of the world. There can be no question that the government and direction of the world falls within the scope of Christ's jurisdiction. For Christ is king, and His kingship embraces the whole universe. He possesses the fullness of kingly power, and through Him the world is being directed to its ultimate destiny. The angels themselves are only the humble servants of Christ the King. He orders and commands as Lord of all the universe. There is nothing that escapes His sovereign rule. Not even the smallest atom stirs without His permission or concurrence. The entire spirit world, including man's spirit, as well as the whole physical universe, is ordained to serve His glory. God has made all creation subject to His sovereign power. Like a ruler who governs and directs His people to their goal, the Word Incarnate directs all intellect toward truth and all will toward happiness and beatitude.

But Christ the King has made His Mother His associate in governing the world. In union with Him she illuminates the world of pure spirits, and all the angels respond to her slightest wish. Mankind, too, and the whole Church are under Mary's guiding, motherly care. Of course, her rule is not the same as Christ's. She is not a Christ-King of the feminine

sex. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, to regard her as such would be a gross misconception. In the realm of kingship as elsewhere, Mary maintains her role as woman, as companion of Christ, and as the Mother of men. Mary's sovereign rule is one that is proper to her, a rule that is characteristic of a woman and a mother. It is nevertheless a supremely real and efficacious rule; and since her merit, her atonement, her prayer, and her mediatory action extend to the entire Mystical Body, it is a rule that is not less universal for being that of a woman and mother.

There are things that we feel more than we know how to express. This is perhaps true regarding Mary's rule in Christ's kingship. The Church seems to take for granted the fact of Mary's rule over men and the universe. On every possible occasion she exalts Mary as queen: "Queen of angels and men, Queen of virgins and confessors, Queen of martyrs, and all saints, Queen not only for her excellence and by reason of the primacy of honor that she enjoys, but Queen in the exercise of real dominion and sovereign rule; Queen, that is, of the world, Queen of heaven and earth, Queen of the universe."

Mary, then, is queen, but queen in the way of a mother, serving all her children, guiding them in their most personal and intimate life, not so much by law and precept as by kindly prompting and persuasion, with an affectionate smile on her countenance as she goes about bestowing a mother's tender care on all her children, on the lowliest no less than on the more fortunate. In fact, the more humble and lowly her children, the more mother she is to them. And the more we put ourselves in Mary's guiding care, the more quickly she leads us up to God.

In union with Christ, Mary guides the entire Church militant on the road to the City of God. But Mary's rule is marked, above all, by the supreme grace of her motherhood. She rules and directs souls with the power of a mother's smile and the irresistible attraction of a mother's sweetness. With a mother's intuition she is ever alert, one might say, to yield to the supremely sovereign and kingly action of her Son, keeping herself in the background, for even in her own sovereign rule over the universe Mary is "more mother than queen." (St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, *Novissima verba*, August 23, 1897).

THE QUEENSHIP OF MARY IN THE CHURCH FATHERS

by
THOMAS B. FALLS

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OF THE MANY titles bestowed upon Our Blessed Lady, that of Queen most aptly expresses our sentiments of ardent loyalty and filial devotion towards the Mother of God. In the Litany she is most appropriately invoked as the Queen of Angels, the Queen of Patriarchs and Prophets, of Apostles and Martyrs, of Confessors and Virgins, and, quite timely, as the Queen of peace. The signs of our times would seem to indicate that in many parts of the world devotion to Our Lady as Queen is becoming more widespread day by day. As recently as 1946 a cathedral was dedicated in Port Said under the title of *Mary, Queen of the Universe*. But this veneration of Mary as Queen is nothing new to Catholics, for the Church has been calling Mary Queen for centuries. In the past the queenship of Mary was joyfully accepted and advocated by such great men as St. Peter Damian, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, St. Bernardine of Siena, St. Antoninus and St. Alphonsus Liguori. Back even in the patristic age—that period embracing the first eight centuries of the Christian era—many Church Fathers recognized and extolled, with both pen and mouth, the sovereignty of Mary.

These Fathers of the Church were led to express their views on the queenship of Mary when their minds were occupied with any of the following three subjects of thought: *first*, when they discussed the bodily Assumption of Mary into heaven, with which they connected her immediately subsequent coronation; *secondly*, when they commented upon certain passages of Sacred Scripture, which they cited to prove the sovereignty of Mary; and *thirdly*, when they spoke of Mary's divine motherhood, from which they deduced the reality of her queenship.

1—Without taking into consideration the apocryphal patristic writings as well as those of extremely doubtful authenticity, we do find several Church Fathers who wrote explicitly of Mary's Assumption into heaven. In the Eastern Church, for instance, St. Modestus of Jerusalem (d. 614), St. Andrew of Crete (d. 675), St. Germanus of Constantinople (d. 733), and St. John of Damascus (d. c. 750) could be cited as early witnesses of the belief in Mary's bodily Assumption; while in the Western Church St. Gregory of Tours (d. 594), St. Ildephonsus of Toledo (d. 669) and St. Venerable Bede (d. 735) testified to the same belief. These Fathers reflected the common Catholic thought of their day when they refused to believe that Mary's immaculate body could have been consigned permanently to the earth where it might have turned to dust. They knew that Mary's sinless body was transported to heaven. They knew that she, in her glorified body, reigns triumphantly as Queen of heaven.

Some of these Fathers spoke openly and explicitly of Mary's queenship. St. Modestus, for example, who was the saintly patriarch of Jerusalem, wrote, at the end of the sixth century, a lengthy description of the Repose of Mary, entitled *On the Falling Asleep of Our Blessed Lady*. In this work he thus described how Mary, intact of body, would be glorious in Paradise:

Hail, most Holy Mother of God. Jesus, Son of God, and King of glory, who has chosen thee to be His spiritual palace here on earth, that, at the same time, He might through thee bestow on us His heavenly kingdom, has willed to have thee with Him in that kingdom, *intact of body and glorious above all*, to the glory of His Father and the Holy Spirit.¹

In the same discourse St. Modestus described Mary's sovereignty thus: Incomparable Ark, not made by the hand of man, but by that of God; not covered with material gold, but all resplendent with the flames of the holy and life-giving Spirit who came down upon her. Christ, the Son of God, whom Mary ever Virgin, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, had clothed with flesh

quickened by a rational soul, had called her to Himself, and has in turn clothed her with incorruptibility like His own, and *crowning her with unrivalled glory*, has bidden her enter upon a share of His inheritance: for she is His Holy Mother. Thus is fulfilled the word of the Psalmist: The Queen stood on Thy right hand, in gilded clothing surrounded with variety.²

In the same passage the saintly Father stated that her body was not subject to the horrors of death, for her death was but a slight repose:

O happy Repose of the glorious ever Virgin Mary, whose body, wherein Life was enclosed, did not suffer the corruption of the grave.³

St. John Damascene, that ardent devotee of Mary, also spoke of her Assumption and Coronation. In fact, on one day he preached at least three sermons on the dormition of Mary. In his second sermon he said:

It is not proper that the holy Virgin should lie encased within the bowels of the earth. The sacred body which God had taken from her in order to unite it to His Person, arose again the third day without being sullied by corruption; so she, too, must be withdrawn from the tomb, and the Mother must pass to the abode of her Son. . . . The Son of God, after having preserved the virginity of His Mother from all blemish at His birth, must keep it from the common decay after death. . . . She whose heart had been transpierced with a sword, as her eyes remained riveted upon her Son hanging from the Cross, must with the same eyes behold Him seated at the right hand of the Father.⁴

In that same homily the holy Doctor explicitly called Mary a Queen: Thy stainless body did not remain within the earth,

for thou wast transported to the royal abode of Heaven—thou who art at once *Queen*, Mistress and *Sovereign*, and very truly the Mother of God.⁵

From these quoted passages it is quite evident that the belief in Mary's Assumption and Coronation in heaven is not new in the Catholic Church.

2—Further evidence of the belief in the queenship of Mary in the early Church is furnished by those Fathers who interpreted certain passages of Sacred Scripture as indicating the sovereignty of Our Lady. The following two passages in particular were used by some Fathers: Psalm 44:10: "The Queen stood on thy right hand, in gilded clothing surrounded with variety"; Apocalypse 12:1: "And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."

In a discourse attributed to St. Athanasius we find the words of the Psalmist interpreted as referring to Our Lady:

The self-same who was born of the Virgin is, in truth, King and the Lord God. And on His account, she who gave Him birth is properly and truly proclaimed *Queen*, Lady and Mother of God. And hence it befits us, as we contemplate her and the Incarnate Son born of her, to say: The Queen stood by thy right hand, in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety. For woman though she is, she is *Queen* and Lady, and Mother of God. And standing now as *Queen* at the right hand of her Son the King of all, she is celebrated in Sacred Writ as clad around with the gilded clothing of incorruption and immortality, and surrounded with variety. Not indeed merely in her spiritual simplicity, and as though without flesh and body does she stand, but clad around as to her most holy flesh with incorruption and immortality; and surrounded with variety as to her most holy bones, which support her flesh. . . .

Let us say then again and again as we look up to Our King, Our Lord and God, and to Our *Queen*, Our Lady and Mother of God: The Queen stood at thy right hand, in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety.⁶

St. Modestus also thought that this passage referred to Mary's sovereignty, for he wrote:

Christ, the Son of God, whom Mary ever Virgin, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, had clothed with flesh quickened by a rational soul, had called her to Himself, and has in turn clothed her with incorruptibility like His own, and *crowning her with unrivalled glory*, had bidden her enter upon a share of His inheritance; for she is His Holy Mother. Thus is fulfilled the word of the Psalmist: The *Queen* stood on thy right hand, in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety.⁷

In an early discourse on the Blessed Mother, attributed to St. Epiphanius but not written by him, the unknown author, commenting upon the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse, recognized Mary as the *woman clothed with the sun*. Although he did not use the word *Queen* explicitly, he did imply it when he called the woman clothed with the sun a *stupendous marvel in heaven*. Here are his words:

O Virgin most holy, thou hast filled the hosts of angels with amazement. A stupendous marvel is in the heavens: *a woman clothed with the sun*, bearing light in her arms. . . . A stupendous marvel in heaven: the Lord of angels has become the infant child of a Virgin. . . . Of old the angels accused Eve, but now they render praise and glory to Mary who has raised up again the fallen Eve, and sent to heaven Adam who

was thrust out of Paradise. For she is the mediatrix between heaven and earth.⁸

3—Finally, the Fathers, in considering Mary's divine motherhood, saw in this truth the basic reason for her queenship. If she brought forth the King of heaven, they reasoned, then she must be the Queen of heaven. This thought is stated very clearly in a sermon attributed to St. Athanasius:

If the Son is a King, the Mother who begot Him is rightly and truly considered a *Queen* and *Sovereign*.⁹

St. John Damascene, in his *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, stated the same truth in different words:

Assuredly she who played the part of the Creator's servant and mother is really in all strictness and truth God's Mother and Lady and *Queen* over all created things.¹⁰

In his first homily the same holy Doctor explained how complete our devotion to Mary should be and how closely we should cling to our Queen for protection:

We serve thee today, O *Queen*. Yes, *Queen* I say, and I repeat it again and again. O virginal Mother of God, we cling to thee as we would to an immovable anchor, and to thee we consecrate ourselves entirely in mind and soul and body.¹¹

Back in the seventh century St. Ildephonsus of Toledo, in his discourse on the perpetual virginity of Mary, gave answer to those who claim that honor paid to Mary is honor taken from God. At the same time he testified to the queenship of Mary when he wrote:

That which is given to the Mother redounds to the Son; the honor given to the *Queen* is honor bestowed on the King.¹²

And in the same work:

I am therefore thy servant because thy Son is my Lord. Thou art my *Queen* because thou hast become the handmaid of my King.¹³

Thus do the Fathers of the Church attest to the universal belief in Mary as "Queen and Lady and Mother of God." Sitting at the right hand of her Divine Son, clothed in glory, Our Blessed Lady, most perfect of human creatures, reigns as Queen of all creation. Our Queen Mother, so signally honored by her Son in heaven, is now, on the occasion of the public definition of our Catholic faith in her Assumption, gloriously honored anew by Christ's Church on earth. Her body, as Catholic tradition relates, even as on earth it partook of the sufferings of Christ, now partakes of the eternal glory of Christ in heaven.

Mary's queenship, then, is a queenship of our own human nature, belonging to her by reason of her intimate relationship with her Divine Son; a crowning glory of our common humanity—a glory which attaches to her soul and to her body. Unsullied by the common decay of death, Mary, gloriously transported into heaven to join her Son, is the second guarantee of our own future resurrection. Yes, Mary, the "Queen of true Faith,"¹⁴ as St. Cyril calls her, in her glorious Assumption is for us the assurance of our own resurrection and the unfailing touchstone of our faith.

¹ St. Modestus of Jerusalem, *Encomium in dormitionem sanctissimae Dominae nostrae Deiparae semperque virginis Mariae*, n. 10.

² *Ibid.*, n. 5.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ St. John Damascene, *In gloriosam dormitionem sanctissimae Dei genitricis ac perpetuae virginis Mariae*, II, n. 18.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Pseudo-Athanasius, *In annuntiationem sanctissimae Dominae nostrae Deiparae*, n. 13-14.

⁷ St. Modestus of Jerusalem, *op. cit.*, n. 5.

⁸ Pseudo-Epiphanius, *Oratio de laudibus sanctissimae matris Deiparae*.

⁹ Pseudo-Athanasius, *op. cit.*, n. 13.

¹⁰ St. John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa*, IV, n. 14.

¹¹ St. John Damascene, *In gloriosam dormitionem sanctissimae Dei genitricis ac perpetuae virginis Mariae*, I, n. 12.

¹² St. Ildephonsus of Toledo, *De virginitate perpetua sanctae Mariae* c. 12; c. 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Homiliae diversae*, Homily IV.

FATIMA AND CONSECRATION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART

RADIO ADDRESS OF POPE PIUS XII, OCTOBER 31, 1942

THIS radio address was given in Portuguese on the occasion of the close of the silver jubilee of Fatima, October 31, 1942. The address contains many references to Mary's Queenship as the Pope calls her Mistress, Queen and Mother, Queen of peace, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, Conqueror in all the great battles of God.

After enumerating the blessings which Our Lady of Fatima has bestowed on Portugal, Pius XII concludes with a beautiful prayer consecrating the human race to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and expresses a parallel between the consecration of mankind to the Sacred Heart by Pope Leo XIII and this consecration to the Immaculate Heart.

FATIMA AND CONSECRATION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART

RADIO ADDRESS OF POPE PIUS XII, OCTOBER 31, 1942

“BLESS the God of heaven, give glory to Him in the sight of all that live, because He hath shown His mercy to you.” (Tobias 12:6)

Once again in this year of graces, you have climbed the holy mountain of Fatima, bearing with you the hearts of all believing Portugal, to lay at the feet of your Virgin Patroness, in that oasis fragrant with faith and piety, the filial tribute of your perfect love. It has been a homage of gratitude for the immense benefits received by you in these latter times, and a confident entreaty that she would continue her patronage over your country from end to end, warding off from it the great tribulation which torments the world.

We, who as common Father of the faithful make our own both the sorrows and the joys of our children, unite ourselves with you with all the affection of our heart, to praise and thank the Lord, Giver of all good things, to thank Him especially for the graces of her by whose hands the Divine munificence pours forth on you these torrents of grace. We do so all the more willingly since, with filial delicacy, it has been your desire, in the midst of this solemn Eucharistic prayer and Jubilee of Our Lady of Fatima, to associate yourselves with the twenty-fifth anniversary of our episcopal consecration.

The Holy Virgin Mary and the Vicar on earth of Christ are two devotions profoundly Portuguese, united in the heart of Portugal “most faithful” from the very dawn of her nationality: for the very first reconquered lands—the nucleus of the future nation—were consecrated to the Mother of God as the *terra de Santa Maria*, the land of Holy Mary, and scarcely had the kingdom been established when it was placed under the protection of St. Peter.

The first and greatest duty of man is gratitude. Nothing is so acceptable to God as a soul grateful for the graces and benefits which it has received. And you owe a great debt to the Virgin, Mistress and Patroness of your country. In a tragic hour of darkness and confusion when the Portuguese Ship of State—the course of its most glorious traditions having been lost—was tossing in the anti-Christian and anti-national storm, and seemed to rush towards certain shipwreck (all unconscious of actual dangers and still less of those to come; dangers which, in any case, mere human prudence, however farseeing, could not have discerned at the time) heaven lovingly intervened, and from out of the dark shone light; chaos gave place to order; calm followed the tempest. And Portugal can rediscover and knit together again the lost thread of its most noble traditions of the "most faithful nation," to follow in our day (as in the time when Christian daring to extend the law of eternal life was never wanting in the *Pequena Casa Lusitana*) the course of glory proper to a crusading and missionary people.

Honor to those worthy men who were the instrument of Providence for so great an enterprise, but, first of all, glory, benediction, and thanksgiving to the Virgin, Mistress, Queen, and Mother of the *terra de Santa Maria* which she has saved a thousand times, and always succours in tragic hours. And this she did so manifestly in what was perhaps the most tragic of all, that already in 1934 our predecessor Pius XI of immortal memory (in the Apostolic Letter *Ex officiosis litteris*) bore witness to the extraordinary benefits with which the Virgin Mother of God had favored your country. At that time the promise of May 1936 against the Communist peril, had not yet been made. This peril came so fearfully close, loomed up so unexpectedly, that no one could have affirmed with certainty that the marvelous peace which Portugal has enjoyed, and which in spite of everything is immeasurably less ruinous than the present war of extermination, could be maintained. Today to such great benefits must be added these greater still. Today, when a very atmosphere of miracle envelopes Portugal—manifesting itself in numerous prodigies of grace and conversion which flower in this springtime of Catholic life and promise to bear abundant fruit, yes, today with much greater reason do we recall her beneficence.

We must confess that the Mother of God has heaped upon you benefits

truly extraordinary. There rests on you the sacred duty of giving her infinite thanks. That you have shown yourselves grateful during this year we know well. Most pleasing to Heaven must have been the official acts of homage, more moving still the sacrifices of little children, the sincere penance and prayer of the humble. Your acts are emblazoned on the scrolls of God: the apotheosis of Our Lady ever Virgin during her progress from the Sanctuary of Fatima to the capital of the Empire on the memorable days of last April eighth and twelfth (perhaps the greatest manifestation of faith in the eight centuries of your country's history); the National Pilgrimage of May 13, that day of heroic sacrifice when, in spite of cold and rain, and enormous distances to be travelled on foot, there were gathered together in Fatima hundreds of thousands of pilgrims to pray, give thanks, and make reparation, among whom, gleaming with youth, enterprise, and vigor, the Catholic Youth stood out proudly; the pageant of youth belonging to the Eucharistic Crusade in which the little children, so beloved by Jesus, could with childlike confidence and innocence protest to the Mother of God that they had done all she had asked—prayers, communions, sacrifices in thousands—and for this reason could supplicate: Our Lady of Fatima now we are alone with you, say to your Divine Son one single word and the world shall be saved, and Portugal be free, entirely free, from the scourge of war; the precious crown of gold and precious stones, still more the perfect love and generous sacrifices which you offered to your Heavenly Patroness in the Sanctuary of Fatima as a symbol and perpetual remembrance of enduring thankfulness; these and other splendid demonstrations which you have made in every diocese and parish during this jubilee year under the guidance of the Episcopate, show clearly how the faithful Portuguese people acknowledge with gratitude, and wishes to pay, its immense debt to its Heavenly Queen and Mother.

Gratitude for the past is a pledge of confidence for the future. God demands that we give Him thanks for benefits received, not because He needs our gratitude but that our gratitude may move Him to grant us benefits greater still. For the same reason it is proper to say that the Mother of God, accepting your thanksgiving, will not leave her work incomplete. She will continue unfailingly the patronage extended to you up to now, and preserve you from the greater calamities. But in order

that this confidence may not be presumptuous, it is necessary that each, recognizing his own responsibilities, endeavor to do nothing that would make him unworthy of the special favor of the Virgin Mother; rather must everyone strive more and more to conciliate Her motherly love. We must listen to the maternal counsel which she gave at the marriage feast of Cana, and do all that she says. She tells us all to do penance—to amend our lives and avoid sin, which is the principal cause of the awful chastisement with which Eternal Justice punishes the world. She bids us be, in a world given over to materialism and pagan propaganda, a sun of light to save and enlighten it. She bids us to cultivate purity, and reflect the holy austerity of the Gospel. She bids us, boldly, cost what it may—as the gathering of Catholic Youth affirmed at Fatma—live as sincere, convinced, integral Catholics. More still she bids us out of the fullness of Christ, to diffuse around us, near and far, the perfume of Christ, and by constant prayer—especially the daily Rosary—as well as by such sacrifices as zeal inspires, to win for sinful souls the life of grace and life eternal.

Doing these things you may call confidently on the Lord; He will hear you. Approaching lovingly the Mother of God, she will answer: Here I am! Then he will not watch in vain who defends the city, for the Lord will watch with him and defend it, and the house built on the foundations of a "new order" will be more secure because the Lord has founded it. Happy the people whose Lord is God and whose Queen is the Mother of God! She will intercede and God will bless His people with that peace which is a compendium of all blessings. *Dominum benedicet populum suum in pace.*

But you must not be blind to what is going on around you. Who can be unmoved at sight of the immense tragedy that agonizes the world? The greater the mercies for which today you thank Our Lady of Fatima, the more assured the confidence you place in her for the future, the nearer you feel her to be, protecting you under her mantle of light, the more tragic appears, by contrast, the fate of so many nations torn to pieces by the greatest calamity in history. Awe-inspiring manifestation of Divine mercy. Our Father is in heaven and does not forget us, not even in the day of His wrath: *Cum iratus fueris, misericordiae recordaberis.*

Now that the fourth year of war has dawned more threateningly than

those that went before in this disastrous and destructive conflict, more than ever only utter confidence in God can be of avail; voiced, before the Divine Throne, by a Mediatrix such as she whom one of our predecessors, during the first World War, directed should be invoked as Queen of Peace. Let us call on her once more, for she alone can help; she whose maternal Heart was moved by the evils grown big in your country and from which she so marvelously rescued it. Compassionating the distress arising from the immense tribulation wherewith the justice of God punishes the world, she has already pointed out, beforehand, the way of salvation by prayer and penance. She can not withhold from us her motherly tenderness nor the efficacy of her patronage.

Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, Help of Christians, Refuge of the human race, Conqueror in all the great battles of God, we suppliantly bow down before your throne. We are confident of winning your pity and of finding favor and present aid in these calamitous days, not because of our deserving, for we have none, but relying solely on the goodness of your maternal heart. In this tragic hour of human history, as Common Father of the great Christian family and Vicar of Him to Whom is given all power in heaven and on earth, and from Whom we have received the care of all souls redeemed by His blood, we give, we entrust, we consecrate to you and to your Immaculate Heart the Holy Church, Mystical Body of your Jesus, suffering and bleeding in so many places. And not only the Church, but also the whole world, torn asunder by internal discords, aflame with the fires of hatred, and victim of its own wickedness.

Oh, be moved at the spectacle of such moral and material ruin; of such suffering and agony of fathers and mothers, of husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and innocent little children; of so many lives cut short in the flower of their age; of so many bodies tortured and agonizing, of so many souls in danger of being lost eternally.

O Mother of Mercy, entreat peace for us from God, and those graces which in one moment can convert evil hearts—graces which prepare, conciliate, and assure peace. Queen of Peace, pray for us and give the world at war the peace desired by the nations: peace in the truth, the charity, and the justice of Christ. Give them peace in body and soul, so that the Kingdom of God may come in the tranquillity of order.

Extend your protection to the infidel and to those who still sit in the shadow of death: give them peace and make the Sun of Truth shine on them, so that with us they may exclaim, before the only Savior of the world: Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of good will.

Give peace to those peoples separated (from the Church) by error and discord, particularly those who have professed a special devotion to you—so that there was no house that did not display its venerated icon (now put away in hiding against a better day); give them peace and bring them back to the one fold of Christ, under the one true Shepherd.

Grant perfect peace and complete liberty for the Holy Church of God. Stem the mounting flood of neo-paganism and all its materialism and stir up in the faithful a love of purity, the practice of the Christian life and apostolic zeal, so that the people who serve God may increase in merit and in number.

Finally, just as the Church and the entire human race were consecrated to the Heart of your Jesus, placing all their hopes in Him as pledge of victory and salvation, so from this day forth let them be consecrated forever also to you and your Immaculate Heart, to you, our Mother and Queen of the world, that your love and patronage may hasten the triumph of the Kingdom of God. May all generations, at peace among themselves and with God, proclaim you blessed and intone with you throughout the entire world, the eternal Magnificat of glory, love, and adoration of the Heart of Jesus, in Whom alone they can find truth, and Life, and peace.

Trusting that these our supplications and yours may be favorably received by the Divine good pleasure, we impart, as pledge of heavenly graces, with all our love and fatherly affection, the Apostolic blessing: to you, beloved Cardinal Patriarch, you, venerable Brethren and clergy, that the grace from on high may make your labors ever more fruitful; to the President of the Republic; to the illustrious Chief of State, and his ministers and authorities, that, in this hour of such unique difficulty, Heaven may continue to assist your activities for the common good and for peace; to our beloved children one and all of Portugal, on the Continent, in the Islands, and beyond the seas. May the Virgin Mother confirm the work she has deigned to do in you.

Pius XII

SOLEMN CROWNING OF THE STATUE OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA

RADIO ADDRESS OF POPE PIUS XII, MAY 13, 1946

800,000 PEOPLE gathered at Fatima on May 13, 1946 for the crowning of the statue of Our Lady by Cardinal Masella, the Papal Legate. Immediately after the coronation ceremonies Pope Pius XII delivered a radio address in Portuguese. It is an extremely important document for explaining the thought of the Church on Mary's Queenship, and the Pope himself has spoken of this address several times as his message on the Queenship.

After stating the fact that Mary's royalty is queenship in the strict sense, based on more than a title of excellence, the Pope discusses the dogmatic foundations for her Queenship, the nature of her Queenship, the extent of her Queenship, and the constant witness of the Church, especially in the liturgy, to Mary's universal Queenship.

SOLEMN CROWNING OF THE STATUE OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA

RADIO ADDRESS OF POPE PIUS XII, MAY 13, 1946

“BLESSED be the Lord God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all consolation, who comforteth us in all our tribulations.” Blessed also, she whom He has appointed Mother of Mercy, our Queen and Advocate, most loving Mediatrix of His graces, Dispenser of His treasures.

Four years ago, amid the turmoil of the most deadly war history has yet seen, when, for the first time, we went up this holy mountain with you in spirit to join you in thanking Our Lady of Fatima for the immense benefits with which she had recently favored you, along with our common Magnificat we uttered a cry of filial confidence that the Immaculate Queen and Patroness of Portugal would complete what she had so marvelously begun.

Your presence in this Sanctuary today, in such immense numbers that they can hardly be calculated, is an affirmation that the Immaculate Virgin Queen, whose maternal and compassionate heart conceived the prodigy of Fatima, has superabundantly heard our prayers.

Moved by an ardent and grateful love you wished to give this love some material expression, condensing and symbolizing it in this precious crown, the fruit of so much generosity and sacrifice, with which we have just crowned the wonder-working image by the hands of our Cardinal Legate.

An expressive symbol, which, if in the eyes of the heavenly Queen it attests your love and gratitude, is first of all for you a memorial of the immense love, manifest in blessings without number, which the Virgin Mother has poured out on her *Terra de Santa Maria*. Eight centuries of

blessings! The first five were under the standard of Santa Maria de Alcobaca, Santa Maria de Victoria, Santa Maria de Belem, in the epic struggles for nationhood against the Crescent, in all the hardy heroisms discovering new isles and new continents, whereby your ancestors went forth planting side by side with their flag the Cross of Christ. The last three centuries were under the special protection of the Immaculate, whom the Monarch of the Restoration, united in assembly with the whole nation, acclaimed the Patroness of his realms and possessions, offering her his crown as a special tribute of vassalage, and swearing to defend, even to the death, the privilege of her Immaculate Conception: "Hoping with great confidence in the infinite mercy of Our Lord, that through Our Lady, Patroness and Protectress of our realms and possessions, whose vassals and servants we have the honor to confess and recognize that we are, He would protect and defend us against our enemies, with great increase of our Kingdoms for the glory of Christ our God, the exaltation of our Holy Roman Catholic Faith, the conversion of the pagans, and the downfall of heresies."

The Virgin most faithful did not betray the trust placed in her. It is sufficient to reflect on these last three decades equivalent to centuries by reason of the crises surmounted and the benefits received during them; sufficient to open one's eyes to see this Cova da Iria transformed into a fountain flowing with supernatural grace; to see the physical prodigies and the even greater moral miracles, the torrents which flow from here all over Portugal and then bursting all frontiers, spread to the whole Church and the world.

How, then, is it possible not to offer thanks? Or rather, is it possible to offer thanks worthily?

Three centuries ago the Monarch of the Restoration laid his royal crown at the feet of the Immaculate, proclaiming her Queen and Patroness, as a sign of his own and his people's love and gratitude. Today it is all of you who act, the people of the *Terra de Santa Maria* together with the shepherds of your souls and your Government, here in this oasis of blessing steeped in the supernatural—where her marvelous patronage is most sensibly experienced, where you all feel her Immaculate Heart closest and beating with immense tenderness and motherly care for you and the world—here, to the ardent prayers, the generous sacrifices, the eucharistic

solemnities, the thousand acts of homage inspired by filial and grateful love, you have added the gift of this precious crown and with it adorned the brow of Our Lady of Fatima.

A precious crown, indeed, expressive symbol of love and gratitude! But this immense concourse of your people, the fervor of your prayers, the thunder of your acclamations, the holy enthusiasm which vibrates in your hearts and, finally, the sacred rite which has just been performed in this hour of incomparable triumph of our most Holy Mother, evokes to our spirit another scene; when, amid other multitudes still less capable of being numbered, other acclamations still more ardent, other triumphs still more divine, in that hour forever solemn of the undying day of Eternity, the glorious Virgin entered triumphantly into the Heavenly Country. Surrounded by the blessed hierarchies and the angelic choirs, she was brought before the throne of the most Blessed Trinity, had set upon her head a triple diadem of glory and, seated at the right hand of the Immortal King of Ages, was presented to the heavenly court as Crowned Queen of the Universe.

And the King saw that she was truly worthy to receive honor, glory, and empire. For, incomparably more than the greatest saints or most sublime angels, separately or together, she was more flooded with grace, holier, more beautiful, more "full of God." She is mysteriously related in the order of the hypostatic union with the most Blessed Trinity, with Him Who alone, by essence, is Infinite Majesty, King of kings and Lord of lords, being firstborn Daughter of the Father, pure Mother of the Word, beloved Spouse of the Holy Spirit. She is Mother of the Divine King to Whom from the maternal womb the Lord God gave the throne of David and enduring royalty in the House of Jacob, Who proclaimed that all power had been given to Him in heaven and on earth. He, the Son of God, decrees for His Heavenly Mother the glory, the majesty, the power of His own kingdom. Associated as Mother and Helper with the King of Martyrs in the ineffable work of the redemption of mankind, she is forever most powerfully associated in the distribution of graces and divine redemption.

Jesus is King of the eternal ages by nature and by conquest. Through Him, with Him, and under Him, Mary is Queen by grace, by divine

relationship, by conquest, by singular election. Her kingdom is as vast as that of her divine Son from Whose dominion nothing is excluded.

For this reason the Church salutes her as Lady and Queen of Angels and of Saints, of Patriarchs and Prophets, of Apostles and Martyrs, of Confessors and Virgins; she acclaims her Queen of heaven and earth, most glorious and worthy Queen of the universe, and she teaches us to invoke her day and night amidst the endless sighs and tears of this exile: Hail holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope!

For her royalty is essentially maternal, exclusively beneficent.

And is it not precisely that royalty that you have experienced? Is it not the endless blessings, the innumerable marks of tenderness with which the maternal Heart of the august Queen has sweetly favored you, that today you are proclaiming and thanking her for?

The most awful war which ever devastated the world rolled for four long years about your frontiers but never crossed them, thanks above all to Our Lady who, from this throne of mercy as from a sublime watch-tower, set up here in the center of the country, watched over you and your government and did not permit the war to touch you save in a degree to make you better appreciate the unheard of calamities from which her protection preserved you.

You crown her Queen of Peace and of the World that she may aid the world to embrace peace and rise from ruin.

Thus this crown, symbol of love and gratitude for the past, of faith and fealty in the present, becomes a crown expressive of loyalty and hope for the future.

Your crowning of this image of Our Lady is an attestation of faith in her royalty, but also of submission to her authority, of filial and constant correspondence to her love. It is more: for by this act you become crusaders for the conquest or reconquest of her kingdom which is the kingdom of God; you undertake, that is to say, to strive that she be loved, venerated, served, by all around you: in the family, in society, in the world.

In this decisive hour of history in which the kingdom of evil with devilish strategy uses all means, deploys all its forces to destroy faith, morality, and the Kingdom of God, the children of light, the children of

God, must expend all and expend themselves in defending it, if we do not want to see a ruin immensely greater and more disastrous than all the material ruins accumulated by the war.

In this struggle there can be no neutrals, no indecisive ones. There must be an enlightened, convinced and fearless Catholicism, that holds the faith and keeps the commandments, whose sentiments and works are in accord, in private and in public; the cry raised four years ago by the spirited Catholic Youth at Fatima: "one hundred per cent Catholic."

Trusting that our prayers may be favorably received by the Immaculate Heart of Mary and hasten the hour of her triumph and the triumph of the Kingdom of God in pledge of heavenly graces, with all our heart and fatherly affection, we impart the Apostolic Blessing, to you, venerable Brethren and all your clergy, to the President of the Republic, to the illustrious head and members of the Government, to all the civil and military authorities, to all of you beloved sons and daughters, devout pilgrims of Our Lady of Fatima, and to all who are united with you in spirit in Portugal, at home and overseas.

Pius XII

AD CAELI REGINAM

ENCYCLICAL LETTER OF POPE PIUS XII, OCTOBER 11, 1954

Ad Caeli Reginam is the encyclical letter of Pope Pius XII in which he instituted a new universal feast of the Queenship for May 31. The encyclical is divided into four major parts: (1) an examination of the teachings of the Fathers, Doctors, and Popes on Mary's royal dignity; (2) the sacred liturgy is cited as a faultless mirror of doctrine expressing the Queenship; Marian prayers, Christian art, and the coronation of statues are given as additional testimony; (3) the dogmatic basis of the title of Queen is shown to be primarily Mary's Divine Maternity, but also her role as Co-redemptrix; (4) the arguments for Mary's Queenship are summarized and the feast instituted for celebration on May 31, together with an order that the human race be consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on the same day.

AD CAELI REGINAM

ENCYCLICAL LETTER OF POPE PIUS XII, OCTOBER 11, 1954

FROM the earliest centuries of the Catholic Church, the Christian people have addressed suppliant prayers and hymns of praise and veneration to the Queen of Heaven, both when they had reason to rejoice and particularly when they were beset by serious troubles. The hope placed in the Mother of the Divine King, Jesus Christ, has never failed. There has never been a weakening of that faith by which we are taught that Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, reigns with her maternal heart over the entire world, just as she is crowned with the diadem of royal glory in heavenly blessedness.

After the frightful calamities which, under our very eyes, have covered flourishing cities, towns, and villages with ruins, we, sorrowing, see so many great spiritual evils spreading themselves abroad with fearful violence, and we behold justice giving way and the attractions of evil triumphing. We are filled with great sorrow in Mary our Queen, manifesting not only our own sense of filial reverence, but also that of all those who glory in the Christian name.

ASSUMPTION DOGMA ANNIVERSARY

It is pleasing and helpful to remember that we ourselves, on the first day of November of the Holy Year 1950, before a huge multitude of Cardinals, Bishops, priests, and of the faithful who had come there from every part of the world, defined the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven¹ where, present in soul and body, she reigns together with her only begotten Son, amid the heavenly choirs of the angels and the Saints. And moreover, since a century was being completed from the time our predecessor of immortal memory, Pius IX,

proclaimed and defined that the great Mother of God had been conceived without any stain of original sin, we instituted this current Marian Year;² now, with great consolation to our fatherly heart we see, not only here in Rome—and especially in the Liberian Basilica, where great multitudes have manifested in a striking way their faith and their most ardent charity towards the heavenly Mother—but also in all parts of the world, that filial reverence toward the Virgin Mother of God has increased more and more, and that the principal shrines of Mary have been visited and are still being visited by many throngs of Catholic pilgrims gathered in prayer.

Everyone knows that we, as often as the opportunity presented itself, that is when we were speaking to our children in Christ who were gathered in our presence, or when, by radio, we spoke to people afar off, we have exhorted all whom we could to love our most kind and powerful Mother, as children should, with a strong and tender love. On this point we may especially call to mind the radio message which we addressed to the people of Portugal, when the miraculous image of the Virgin Mary, which is venerated at Fatima, was being crowned with a golden diadem.³ We ourselves called that image the messenger of the "royalty" of Mary.⁴

CLOSE OF THE MARIAN YEAR

And now, so that we may, as it were, bring to a climax the series of many manifestations of our filial reverence towards the great Mother of God, manifestations which the Christian people have followed so carefully, and likewise so that we may happily and usefully conclude the Marian Year, which is now drawing to a close, and so that we may freely grant the urgent petitions on this matter which have come to us from all over the world, we have decided to institute a liturgical feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary as Queen.

On this point we have not wished to propose a new truth for the Christian people to believe, since actually the title and the arguments on which Mary's royal dignity is based have at all times been clearly expressed, and are already contained as handed down long ago in the documents of the Church and in the books of the sacred liturgy.

It is our pleasure to recall these things in this present encyclical letter, so that we may renew the praises of our heavenly Mother, and so that we

may encourage a more zealous filial reverence towards her, to bring spiritual gain to the souls of all men.

I. FATHERS, DOCTORS AND POPES

Since the Christian people, even long ago, rightly believed that she from whom was born the Son of the Most High, the One who "will reign in the House of Jacob forever,"⁵ the "Prince of Peace,"⁶ the "King of kings and the Lord of lords,"⁷ has received singular gifts of grace over and above all other creatures and since they took cognizance of the intimate connection between the Mother and the Son, they easily acknowledged the supreme royal dignity of the Mother of God.

Hence it is not astonishing that the ancient writers of the Church, basing their stand on the words of St. Gabriel the Archangel who foretold that Mary's Son was going to reign forever,⁸ and on the words of Elizabeth who reverently greeting her, praised "the Mother of my Lord,"⁹ called Mary "the Mother of the King," and "the Mother of the Lord," thereby clearly signifying that, from the royal dignity of her Son, she has obtained eminence and outstanding position.

So it is that *St. Ephrem*, burning with poetic inspiration, represents her as speaking in this way: "Let heaven sustain me in its embrace, because I am honored above it. For heaven was not Thy mother, but Thou hast made it Thy throne. How much more honorable and venerable than the throne of a king is his mother."¹⁰ And in another place he thus prays to her: "... girl, empress and ruler, queen, lady, protect and keep me in your arms lest Satan who causes evil exult against me, lest my wicked foe be glorified against me."¹¹

Mary is called by *St. Gregory Nazianzen* "the Mother of the King of the entire universe," and the "Virgin Mother who brought forth the King of the entire world."¹² And *Prudentius* asserts that the mother marvels "that she has brought forth God as man, and even as Supreme King."¹³

And this royal dignity of the Blessed Virgin Mary is clearly and openly meant and stated by those who call her "Lady," "Mistress," and "Queen."

Already in one of the homilies attributed to *Origen*, Mary is called by Elizabeth, not only "the Mother of my Lord," but also "Thou my Lady."¹⁴

The same thing is found in the writings of *St. Jerome* where he introduces the following statement amid various explanations of Mary's name: "We should realize that Mary means Lady in the Syrian language."¹⁵ After him *St. Chrysologus* says the same thing in a more certain fashion in these words: "The Hebrew name 'Mary' means 'Domina' (Lady) in Latin. The Angel therefore calls her Lady so that the Mother of the Lord, whom the authority of her Son made and caused to be born and to be called the Lady, might be without servile fear."¹⁶

Moreover *Epiphanius*, the Bishop of Constantinople, writing to the Sovereign Pontiff Hormisdas, says that we should pray that the unity of the Church may be preserved "by the grace of the holy and consubstantial Trinity and by the prayers of Mary, Our Lady, the holy and glorious Virgin and Mother of God."¹⁷

Another writer of that same era thus solemnly salutes the Blessed Virgin sitting at the right hand of God to pray for us: "the Lady ruler of mortal man, the most holy Mother of God."¹⁸

St. Andrew of Crete frequently ascribed the dignity of a queen to the Virgin Mary. He has written this, for example: "His ever-virgin Mother, from whose womb He, being God, took on human form, He today transports from earthly dwellings as Queen of the human race."¹⁹

And in another place he speaks of "the Queen of the entire human race, faithful in reality to the meaning of her name, who is exalted above all things save only God Himself."²⁰

Likewise *St. Germanus* speaks to the humble Virgin in these words: "Be seated, Lady, for it is fitting that you should sit in a high place since you are a Queen and glorious above all kings."²¹ He likewise calls her "the Lady ruler of all those who dwell on earth."²²

She is called by *St. John Damascene*: "Queen, ruler, and lady,"²³ and also "the Lady ruler of every creature."²⁴ Another ancient writer of the Eastern Church calls her "the fortunate Queen," "the perpetual Queen beside the King, her Son," "whose glorious head is crowned with a golden diadem."²⁵

And finally *St. Ildephonsus of Toledo* gathers together almost all of the titles of honor in this salutation: "O my Lady, my Ruler, Thou who govern me, Mother of my Lord... Lady among the handmaidens, Queen among sisters."²⁶

The theologians of the Church, deriving their teaching from these and almost innumerable other testimonies handed down long ago, have called the most Blessed Virgin the Queen of all creatures, the Queen of the world, and the Lady ruler of all things.

And the supreme pastors of the Church have considered it their duty to approve and advance by their own words of praise the piety of the Christian people towards the heavenly Mother and Queen. And so, to pass over the documents of more recent Pontiffs, it is well to remember that already in the seventh century our predecessor, *St. Martin I*, called Mary "our glorious Lady, ever Virgin."²⁷ *St. Agatho*, in the Synodal letter sent to the Fathers of the Sixth Ecumenical Council called her "Our Lady, really and truly the mother of God."²⁸ And in the eighth century *Gregory II* in the letter sent to *St. Germanus*, the patriarch, and read in the Seventh Ecumenical Council with all the Fathers applauding, called the Mother of God: "The Lady ruler of all, the true mother of God," and also "the Lady ruler of all Christians."²⁹

We wish also to recall that our predecessor of immortal memory, *Sixtus IV*, touched favorably upon the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin beginning the Apostolic Letter "Cum praeexcelsa"³⁰ with words in which Mary is called "Queen," "Who is always vigilant to intercede with the King whom she bore." *Benedict XIV* also asserted this in his Apostolic Letter "Gloriosae Dominae" in which Mary is called "Queen of heaven and earth" and it is stated that the sovereign King has in some way communicated His power of ruling to her.³¹

Consequently *St. Alphonsus Liguori*, collecting all the testimonies of past ages, most reverently writes these words: "Because the Virgin Mary was raised up to such a lofty dignity as to be the mother of the King of kings, therefore rightly and deservedly the Church has honored her with the title of 'Queen.'"³²

II. THE SACRED LITURGY

Furthermore, the sacred liturgy, which is as it were, a faultless mirror of the doctrine handed down from tradition and believed by the Christian people through the course of all ages both in the East and in the West, has sung the praises of the heavenly Queen, and constantly sings them.

Ardent voices from the East sing out: "O mother of God, today thou art carried into heaven on the chariots of the cherubim, the seraphim wait upon thee and the ranks of the heavenly host bow before thee."³³

Further: "O just, O most blessed Joseph, since thou art sprung from a royal line, thou hast been chosen from among all to be spouse of the pure Queen who in a way which defies description will give birth to Jesus the King."³⁴ In addition: "I shall sing a hymn to the Mother, the Queen, whom I shall joyously approach to praise her, gladly singing of her wonders. . . . Our tongue cannot worthily praise thee, O Lady; for thou who hast borne Christ the King, art exalted above the seraphim. . . . Hail, O Queen of the world; hail, O Mary, Lady ruler of us all."³⁵

We read, moreover, in the Ethiopic Missal: "O Mary, center of the whole world, . . . thou art greater than the many-eyed cherubim and the six-winged seraphim. . . . The heaven and the earth is entirely filled with the sanctity of thy glory."³⁶

MARIAN PRAYERS

Furthermore, the Latin Church sings that ancient and very sweet prayer which is known as the "Hail Holy Queen" and the lovely antiphons "Hail Heavenly Queen," "O Queen of Heaven Rejoice," and likewise those which we are accustomed to recite on feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary: "The Queen stood at Thy right hand in golden vesture surrounded with beauty";³⁷ "Heaven and earth praise thee as a powerful Queen";³⁸ "Today the Virgin Mary ascends the heavens: rejoice because she reigns with Christ forever."³⁹

LITANY OF LORETO

To these should be added, in addition to other things, the Litany of Loreto which daily invites the Christian people to call upon Mary as Queen. Likewise, for many centuries, Christians have been accustomed to meditate upon the ruling power of Mary which embraces heaven and earth when they consider the fifth glorious mystery of the Rosary which can be called the mystical crown of the heavenly Queen.

CHRISTIAN ART

Finally, art which is based upon Christian principles and is animated by their spirit as something which faithfully interprets the sincere and

freely expressed reverence of the faithful, has since the Council of Ephesus portrayed Mary as Queen and empress seated upon a royal throne adorned with the royal insignia, crowned with the royal diadem and surrounded by the host of angels and saints in heaven, and ruling not only nature and its powers but also over the machinations of Satan. Iconography, to represent the royal dignity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, has always been enriched with works of the highest artistic value and the greatest beauty and has gone so far as to represent colorfully the Divine Redeemer crowning his mother with a splendid diadem.

CORONATION OF STATUES

The Roman Pontiffs, favoring this devotion of the people, have often decorated with a crown, either personally or through representatives, the images of the Virgin mother of God which were already distinguished by public veneration.

III. QUEENSHIP AND DIVINE MATERNITY

As we have already indicated above, venerable brethren, *the basic principle upon which Mary's royal dignity rests*, a principle already evident in the documents handed down by tradition and in the sacred liturgy, *is without doubt her divine maternity*. In the sacred scriptures we read this statement about the Son whom the Virgin will conceive: "He shall be called great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord will give Him the throne of David His father, and He shall be king over the house of David forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end."⁴⁰ And furthermore, Mary is called the "Mother of the Lord."⁴¹ From this it is easily deduced that she too is Queen since she brought forth a Son who, at the very moment that He was conceived, was, by reason of the hypostatic union of the human nature with the Word, even as man, King and Lord of all things. As a result St. John Damascene could rightly and deservedly write these words: "Truly she has become the Lady ruler of every creature since she is the mother of the Creator."⁴² And it can likewise be said that the first one who with heavenly voice announced Mary's royal office was Gabriel the Archangel himself.

QUEENSHIP AND CO-REDEMPTION

Now, *the most Blessed Virgin Mary is to be called Queen* not only by reason of her divine maternity, but also *because by the will of God she has had an outstanding part in the work of our eternal salvation.* "What more pleasant or sweeter thought could we have," wrote our predecessor of happy memory, Pius XI, "than that Christ rules over us not only by native right but also by an acquired right, namely that of the redemption? Would that all men who have forgotten how much we have cost our Savior might remember: 'You were redeemed . . . not with perishable things, with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.'⁴³ We are no longer our own for 'at a great price'⁴⁴ Christ has purchased us."⁴⁵

Now, in accomplishing this work of the redemption the Most Blessed Virgin Mary was certainly intimately associated with Christ. Appropriately, therefore, we sing in the sacred liturgy: "Holy Mary the Queen of heaven and the Lady ruler of the World was standing, sorrowful, by the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ."⁴⁶ Wherefore, as even in the Middle Ages, a very pious student of St. Anselm wrote, "As . . . God is the Father and Lord of all things preparing all by his power, so the Blessed Mary, repairing all things by her merits is the mother and ruler of all. For God is the Lord of all things, in each constituting by His command in its own nature, and Mary is the Lady ruler of all in restoring each to its original dignity through that grace which she has merited."⁴⁷

"As Christ is our Lord and King by a special title because He redeemed us, so the Blessed Virgin (is our Lady and Queen) because of the unique way in which she has co-operated toward our redemption by giving of her own substance, by offering Him willingly for us, and by desiring, praying for, and bringing about our salvation in a singular manner."⁴⁸

From these premises the following argument is drawn: Mary was by the will of God, associated with Jesus Christ, the principle of salvation itself, in bringing about spiritual salvation in a way that was quite similar to the way in which Eve was associated with Adam, the principle of death, so that it may be said that the work of our salvation was accomplished through a certain "recapitulation," in which a virgin is instrumental in saving the human race just as a virgin was instrumental in making it subject to death.⁴⁹

Moreover, it can also be said that this most glorious Lady was the beloved mother of Christ precisely "so that she might be made His associate in the redemption of the human race."⁵⁰ Actually, "It was she, the second Eve who, free from all sin, original or personal, and always most intimately united with her Son, offered Him on Golgotha to the Eternal Father of all the children of Adam, sin-stained by this unhappy fall, and her mother's rights and mother's love were included in the holocaust."⁵¹ Hence we may certainly conclude that just as Christ, the new Adam, must be called King, not only because He is the Son of God, but also because He is our Redeemer; so, by a certain kind of analogy, the most Blessed Virgin is Queen, not only because she is the mother of God, but also because, as the new Eve, she was associated with the new Adam.

And so it is that Jesus Christ alone, God and man, is King in the full, proper, and absolute sense of the term. Yet Mary also, although in a restricted way and only by analogy, shares in the royal dignity as the mother of Christ who is God, as His associate in the labors of the Divine redemption, and in His struggle against His enemies and in the victory He won over them all. From this association with Christ the King she obtains a splendor and eminence surpassing the excellence of all created things. From this association with Christ comes the royal function by which she can disperse the treasures of the Divine Redeemer's Kingdom. Finally, from this association with Christ comes the unfailing efficacy of her maternal intercession with the Son and with the Father.

There is no doubt whatsoever that the most holy Mary surpasses all created things in dignity and likewise that she has gained a primacy, after her Son, over all things. As *St. Sophronius* says: "Thou hast, in fact, far surpassed every creature. . . . What could be more sublime than this joy, O Virgin Mother? And what could be greater than this grace which thou alone hast received from God?"⁵² *St. Germanus* adds these words of praise to that greeting: "Thine honor and dignity surpass all created things."⁵³ *St. John Damascene* goes so far as to say that "There is an infinite difference between God's servants and His Mother."⁵⁴

In order to understand this most exalted grade of dignity which the mother of God has obtained above all created things, we should recall

that the holy mother of God was, already in the first moment of her conception, filled with such an abundance of graces as to surpass the grace of all the Saints. Hence—as our predecessor of happy memory, Pius IX, wrote in his Apostolic Letter—the indescribably perfect God “so marvelously endowed her above all the angels and Saints with the abundance of all heavenly gifts from the treasury of the Divinity that she, always completely free from every stain of sin and entirely beautiful and perfect, possesses such a fullness of innocence and holiness that under God no greater than this is understood and that no one other than God Himself can ever know.”⁵⁵

Moreover, the Blessed Virgin has not only received the grade of excellence and perfection which is supreme after that of Christ Himself but has also received some sharing of that efficacy by which her Son and our Redeemer is rightly and properly said to reign over the minds and wills of men. For if the word of God performs miracles and gives grace through the Humanity He has assumed, if He employs the Sacraments and His Saints as instruments for the salvation of souls, why should He not use His mother’s office and efforts to bring us the fruits of the Redemption?

As our predecessor of immortal memory, *Pius IX*, said: “Turning her maternal heart toward us and dealing with the affairs of our salvation, she is concerned with the whole human race. Constituted by the Lord, Queen of heaven and earth, and exalted above all the choirs of angels and the ranks of the Saints in heaven, standing at the right hand of her only begotten Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, she petitions most powerfully with her maternal prayers, and she obtains what she seeks. And she cannot fail.”⁵⁶ On this subject another of our predecessors of happy memory, *Leo XIII*, has said that in the distribution of graces an “almost immeasurable power” was given to the most Blessed Virgin Mary.⁵⁷ *St. Pius X* adds that Mary performs this function “as it were by a mother’s right.”⁵⁸

Therefore, let all Christ’s faithful glory in the fact that they are subject to the rule of the Virgin Mother of God who both enjoys royal power and burns with a mother’s love.

Yet, in these and other questions about the Blessed Virgin let theologians and preachers of the word of God take care to avoid certain devia-

tions lest they fall into twofold error. Let them beware of teachings that lack foundation, and that, by misuse of words, exceed the bounds of truth. And let them beware of too great a narrowness of mind when they are considering that unique, completely exalted, indeed almost divine dignity of the Mother of God which the Angelic Doctor teaches we must attribute to her "by reason of the infinite good which is God."⁵⁹

Moreover, in this part of Christian doctrine as in others the living Magisterium of the Church which Christ has constituted "to elucidate and explain things that are contained in the deposit of faith only obscurely and, as it were, implicitly" stands forth for all as "the immediate and universal norm of truth."⁶⁰

IV. SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY

Therefore, from the monuments of Christian antiquity, from liturgical prayers, from the Christian people's profound sense of religion, and from the works of art that have been produced, we have collected statements asserting that the Virgin Mother of God possesses royal dignity. Likewise we have proved that the arguments which sacred theology has constructed by reasoning from the deposit of divine faith completely confirmed this same truth. From so many testimonies gathered together there is formed as it were, a far-sounding chorus that praises the high eminence of the royal honor of the Mother of God and men to whom all created things are subject and who is "exalted above the choirs of the angels unto heavenly kingdoms."⁶¹

Since, after long and careful consideration we have come to the conclusion that great benefits will accrue to the Church if that solidly established truth were to shine forth even more clearly to all, like a bright light placed on its pedestal, we, by our apostolic power, decree and institute the feast of Mary as Queen to be celebrated throughout the entire world every year on May 31. And likewise we command that on that same day there be renewed the consecration of the human race to the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Upon this there is founded a great hope that there may arise an era of happiness that will rejoice in the triumph of religion and in Christian peace.

Therefore let all approach with greater confidence now than before to the throne of mercy and grace of our Queen and Mother to beg help in difficulty, light in darkness, and solace in trouble and sorrow. And, what is very important, let them strive to free themselves from the servitude of sin. Let them pay unswerving homage, mingled with the beauteous veneration of her children to the royal scepter of that great Mother. May her shrines be filled with a multitude of people, and may her feasts be celebrated. May her Rosary be found in the hands of all. May she gather together small groups or great multitudes of Christ's faithful in churches, in homes, in hospitals, and in prisons, to sing her praises. May the name of Mary, which is sweeter than nectar and more precious than any jewel, be given the highest honor. Let no one speak vile words against that name so majestically beautiful and venerable by her maternal grace. Such talk is the sign of a vile mind. And let no one dare say anything lacking in due reverence to her.

RESULTS OF THE FEAST

Let all strive vigilantly and strenuously to reproduce, each according to his own condition, in his own soul and in his own conduct the exalted virtues of our heavenly Queen and our most loving Mother. And hence it will follow that those who are counted as Christians, honoring and imitating their Queen and Mother, will finally realize that they are truly brothers, and spurning jealousies and immoderate desires, may promote social charity, respect the rights of the weak, and love peace. And let no one consider himself a child of Mary to be taken readily under her most powerful protection unless, according to her example, he practices justice, meekness and chastity and devotes himself to true brotherhood, not harming or hurting anyone, but rather helping and consoling.

In some parts of the world there are those who, because of the Christian name, suffer persecution and are deprived of divine and human rights to liberty. Justified protests and repeated complaints have up until now availed nothing to remove these evils. May the powerful Queen of creation, whose radiant glance banishes storms and tempests and brings back cloudless skies, look upon these her innocent and tormented children with eyes of mercy; may the Virgin, who is able to subdue violence beneath her foot, grant that, enjoying at last the liberty which is their

due, they may be able to practice their religion openly. Furthermore, while they are serving the cause of the Gospel, may they advance the strength and the growth of earthly states by their concerted effort and by the splendid virtues which amid these hardships shine forth as examples.

We also think that the Feast which we have instituted through this Encyclical Letter, so that all may more clearly acknowledge and more zealously venerate the kind and maternal rule of the Mother of God, can contribute a great deal toward keeping, strengthening and continuing the peace among nations which almost every day disquieting events disturb. Is she not the bow that God has placed in the clouds, the sign of the covenant that brings peace?⁶² "Look upon the rainbow, and bless him that made it; it is very beautiful in its brightness. It encompasseth the heaven about with the circle of its glory, the hands of the Most High have displayed it."⁶³ Whoever, therefore, honors the Lady-ruler of angels and of men—let no one think himself exempt from the payment of that tribute of a grateful and loving soul—let him call upon her as most truly Queen and as the Queen who brings peace. Let him honor and guard the peace that is neither unpunished wickedness nor unrestrained license, but is concord and well-ordered under the command and decree of the Divine Will. The maternal exhortations and orders of the Virgin Mary work to protect and increase this peace.

Since we hope very much that the Queen and Mother of the Christian people may accept these our prayers and bring happiness through her peace to the earth that is troubled by hatred, and may show us all, after this exile, Jesus Who will be our enduring peace and joy, we cordially grant to you, venerable brethren, and to your flocks, the Apostolic Benediction as a gauge of Almighty God's help and as a token of our love.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter, on the Feast of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, on the eleventh day of the month of October in the year 1954, the sixteenth of our Pontificate.

Pius XII

¹ Cf. *Munificentissimus Deus*: A.A.S. XXXXII, 1950, p. 753 sq.

² Cf. *Fulgens Corona*: A.A.S. XXXXV, 1953, p. 577 sq.

³ Cf. A.A.S. XXXVIII, 1946, p. 264 sq.

⁴ Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, d. 19 Maii a. 1946.

⁵ Luke 1:32.

⁶ Is. 9:6.

⁷ Apoc. 19:16.

⁸ Cf. Luke 1:32-33.

⁹ Luke 1:43.

¹⁰ S. Ephraem, *Hymni de B. Maria*, ed. Th. J. Lamy, t. II, Mechliniae, 1886, Hymn. XIX p. 624.

¹¹ Idem, *Oratio ad SS.mam Dei Matrem; Opera Omnia*, Ed. Assemani, t. III (graece), Romae, 1747, p. 546.

¹² S. Gregorius Naz., *Poemata Dogmatica*, XVIII, v. 58; P. G. XXXVII, 485.

¹³ Prudentius, *Dittochaemum*, XXVII; P. L. LX, 102A.

¹⁴ *Hom. in S. Lucam*, Hom. VII; ed. Rauer, Origenes Werke, T. IX, p. 48 (ex catena Macarii Chrysocephali). Cf. P. G. XIII, 1902 D.

¹⁵ S. Hieronymus, *Liber de Nominibus Hebraeis*: P. L. XXIII, 886.

¹⁶ S. Petrus Chrysologus, Sermo 142, *De Annunciatione B.M.V.*: P. L. LII, 579 C; cf. etiam 582 B; 584 A: "Regina totius exstitit castitatis."

¹⁷ *Relatio Epiphaniae Ep. Constantin.*: P. L. LXIII, 498 D.

¹⁸ *Encomium in Dormitionem SS.mae Deiparae* (inter opera S. Modesti): P. G. LXXXVI, 3306 B.

¹⁹ S. Andreas Cretensis, *Homilia II in Dormitionem SS.mae Deiparae*: P. G. XCVII, 1079 B.

²⁰ Id., *Homilia III in Dormitionem SS.mae Deiparae*: P. G. XCVII, 1099 A.

²¹ S. Germanus, *In Praesentationem Sanctissimae Deiparae*, I: P. G. XCVIII, 303 A.

²² Id., *In Praesentationem SS.mae Deiparae*, II: P. G. XCVIII, 315 C.

²³ S. Ioannes Damascenus, *Homilia I in Dormitionem B.M.V.*: P. G. XCVI, 719 A.

²⁴ Id., *De Fide Orthodoxa*, I, IV, c. 14: P. G. XLIV, 1158 B.

²⁵ *De Laudibus Mariae* (inter opera Venantii Fortunati): P. L. LXXXVIII, 282 B et 283 A.

²⁶ Ildefonsus Tolentanus, *De Virginitate Perpetua B.M.V.*: P. L. XCVI, 58 A. D.

²⁷ S. Martinus I, *Epist. XIV*: P. L. LXXXVII, 199-200 A.

²⁸ S. Agatho: P. L. LXXXVII, 1221 A.

²⁹ Hardouin, *Acta Conciliorum*, IV, 234; 238; P. L. LXXXIX, 508 B.

³⁰ Xystus IV, *Bulla Cum Praeexcelsa*, d. 28 Febr. a. 1476.

³¹ Benedictus XIV, *Bulla Gloriosae Dominae*, d. 27 Sept. a. 1748.

³² S. Alfonso, *Le Glorie di Maria*, p. I, c. I,—1.

³³ Ex liturgia Armenorum: in festo Assumptionis, hymnus ad Matutinum.

³⁴ Ex *Menaio* (byzantino): Dominica post Natalem, in Canone, ad Matutinum.

- ³⁵ Officium hymni *Achatistos* (in ritu byzantino).
³⁶ *Missale Aethiopicum*, Anaphora Dominae nostrae Mariae, Matris Dei.
³⁷ *Brev. Rom.*, Versiculus sexti Respons.
³⁸ Festum Assumptionis; hymnus Laudum.
³⁹ *Ibid.*, ad Magnificat II Vesp.
⁴⁰ Luke 1:32-33.
⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1:43.
⁴² S. Ioannes Damascenus, *De Fide Orthodoxa*, 1. IV, c. 14, P. G. XCIV, 1158 s. B.
⁴³ I Petr. 1:18-19.
⁴⁴ I Cor. 6:20.
⁴⁵ Pius XI, *Quas Primas*: A. A. S. XVII, 1925, p. 599.
⁴⁶ Festum septem dolorum B. Mariae Virg. Tractus.
⁴⁷ Eadmerus, *De Excellentia Virginis Mariae*, c. 11: P.L. CLIX, 508 A. B.
⁴⁸ F. Suarez, *De Mysteriis Vitae Christi*, disp. XXII, sect. II (ed. Vives, XIX, 327).
⁴⁹ S. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.*, V. 19, 1: P. G. VII, 1175 B.
⁵⁰ Pius XI, *Auspicatus Profecto*: A. A. S. XXV, 1933, p. 80.
⁵¹ Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*: A.A.S. XXXV, 1943, p. 247.
⁵² S. Sophronius. *In Annunciationem Beatae Mariae Virg.*: P. G. LXXXVII, 3238 D; 3242 A.
⁵³ S. Germanus, *Hom. II in Dormitionem Beatae Mariae Virg.*: P. G. XCVIII, 354 B.
⁵⁴ S. Joannes Damascenus, *Hom. I in Dormitionem Beatae Mariae Virg.*: P. G. XCVI.
⁵⁵ Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*: Acta Pii IX, I. p. 597-598.
⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p. 618.
⁵⁷ Leo XIII, *Adintricem Populi*: A. S. S. XXVIII, 1895-1896, p. 130.
⁵⁸ Pius X, *Ad Diem Illum*: A. S. S. XXXVI, 1903-1904, p. 455.
⁵⁹ S. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, I, q. 25, a. 6, ad 4.
⁶⁰ Pius XII, *Humani Generis*: A. A. S., XLII, 1950, p. 569.
⁶¹ *Ex Brev. Rom.*: Festum Assumptionis Beatae Mariae Virginis.
⁶² Cf. *Gen.* 9:13.
⁶³ *Ecclus.* 43:12-13.

QUEENSHIP PRAYER

by

POPE PIUS XII

OUT of the depths of this valley of tears, through which suffering humanity painfully struggles—up from the bellows of this sea, endlessly buffeted by the waves of suffering—we raise our eyes to you, most beloved Mother Mary, to be comforted by the contemplation of your glory and to hail you as Queen and Mistress of heaven and earth, Queen and Mistress of mankind.

With legitimate filial pride, we wish to exalt your queenship and to recognize it as due to the sovereign excellence of your entire being, O most sweet true Mother of Him Who is King by right, by inheritance and by conquest.

Reign, O Mother and Mistress, by showing us the path of holiness, and by guiding and assisting us that we may never stray from it.

In the heights of heaven, you exercise your primacy over the choirs of angels, who acclaim you as their sovereign, and over the legions of saints who delight in beholding your dazzling beauty. So, too, reign over the entire human race, above all by opening the path of faith to those who do not yet know your Divine Son.

Reign over the Church, which acknowledges and extols your gentle dominion and has recourse to you as a safe refuge amid the calamities of our day. Reign especially over that part of the Church which is persecuted and oppressed; give it strength to bear adversity, constancy never to yield under unjust compulsion, light to avoid falling into enemy snares, firmness to resist overt attack, and at every moment unwavering faithfulness to your kingdom.

Reign over men's minds, that they may seek only what is true; over their wills, that they may follow solely what is good; over their hearts, that they may love nothing but what you yourself love.

Reign in the streets and the squares, in the cities and the villages, in the valleys and the mountains, in the air, on land and on the sea; and hear the pious prayer of all those who recognize that yours is a reign of mercy, in which every petition is heard, every sorrow comforted, every misfortune relieved, every infirmity healed, and in which, at a gesture from your gentle hands, from death itself there arises smiling life.

Obtain for us that all who now, in every corner of the world, acclaim and hail you Queen and Mistress, may one day in heaven enjoy the fullness of your kingdom in the vision of your Divine Son, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

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